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THE WIDOW'S SON

THE
LIFE OF CHRIST.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM ✓HANNA, D.D., LL.D.

Vol. II.
CLOSE OF THE MINISTRY,
AND
PASSION WEEK.

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THE

CLOSE OF THE MINISTRY.

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THE CLOSE OF THE MINISTRY.

I.

THE DESCENT OF THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION.*

MORNING has dawned upon the mountain-top which had witnessed the wonderful night-scene of the transfiguration. Jesus and the three disciples begin to descend. The silence they at first observe is broken by our Lord turning to his disciples and saying, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." A few days before, Jesus had straitly charged them that they should tell no man that he was the Christ. The discovery would be premature. The people were not prepared for it. It would come unsuitably as well as unseasonably from

* Matt. xvii. 9-27 ; Mark ix. 9-32 ; Luke ix. 37-45.

the lips of the apostles. It might serve to interrupt that course of things which was to guide onward to the great decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. And whatever reasons there were for a temporary concealment from the multitude of such knowledge as to their Master's true character and office as the apostles possessed, still stronger reasons were there that they should preserve silence as to this vision on the Mount, the narration of which would be sure at that time to provoke nothing but derision. Not even to the other nine were the three to speak of it till the key to its true interpretation was in all their hands, for even by them, in the meantime, it was little likely to be rightly apprehended, and it was not a topic to be rudely handled as a thing of idle and ignorant talk. The seal thus put upon the lips of the three, we have no reason to believe was broken till the time came when they stood relieved from the obligation it imposed. All the more curiously would the matter be scanned by the three when alone. The thing that most perplexed them as they did so was, what the rising from the dead could mean. They did not venture to put any question to their Master. Now, upon the mountain side,

as afterwards, they were afraid to ask him about it, with something perhaps of the feeling of those who do not like to ask more about a matter which has saddened them so much to hear about at all ; from all fuller and distincter sight of which they shrink.

But there was a question, and that a very natural one in the existing circumstances, which they did venture to put to Jesus by the way. They had just seen Elias standing by the side of their Master, to be with him in that brief interview, and then depart. Was this that coming of the Great Prophet about which the scribes spoke so much ? It could scarcely be so, for that coming was to precede the advent of the Messiah. But if Jesus were the Christ, and this which they had just witnessed were the coming of Elias, the prescribed prophetic order would be reversed. In the uncertainty and confusion of their thoughts they put the question to their Master, “ Why say the scribes that Elias must first come ? ” Jesus had already—months before—on the occasion of the visit of the two disciples of the Baptist, said to them plainly enough, “ If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was to come.” They had not fully understood or received it. In common with

the whole body of their countrymen, their original idea had been, that it was to be an actual return of Elijah himself to the earth which was to be the precursor of the appearance of their Messiah. This conception the sayings of Jesus may have served partially to rectify ; but now, when Elijah comes and presents himself before their eyes, it returns, and in returning blinds and confuses them once more. Our Lord's answer is so far clear enough, that he confirms the dictum of the scribes as founded on a right reading of the ancient prophecies, especially of the one by Malachi, recorded in the fourth chapter of that prophet's writings. It was true what these scribes had said, that Elias must first come. But they were in error when they looked for a personal visit from the old prophet as the precursor of the first advent of the Christ. They had failed to see in the person and ministry of John one coming in the spirit and power of Elias. They had taken too hastily the Baptist at his word when he said he was not Elias, as in a literal sense he was not. And misapprehending his character and mission, they had allowed their natural dislike to such a person and ministry as his to grow till it culminated

in that act of Herod by which the disliked preacher of righteousness was cut off. Once more, therefore, does Jesus renew the testimony he had already borne to the Baptist: I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." The treatment they gave to the forerunner was no inapt symbol of that which they were preparing for Christ himself, for "likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."

Then the disciples understood that "he spake unto them of John the Baptist." But did they understand that in his answer to their inquiry our Lord alluded to another, a future coming of Elias, of which that of the Baptist was but a type or a prelude, as well as to another, a future coming of the Son of man with which it was to be connected? Many think that not obscurely, such an allusion lay in the words which Christ employed, and that it is in the two advents, each prefaced with its appropriate precursorage, that the full and varied language of ancient prophecy receives alone its fit and adequate accomplishment.

But we must now turn our eye from the little group conversing about Elias, as they de-

scended the hill-side, to what was occurring elsewhere, down in the valley among the villages that lay at the base of the mountain. Among the villagers there had occurred a case of rare and complicated distress. A youth, the only son of his father, had fallen the victim to strange and fearful paroxysms, in which his own proper speech was taken from him, and he uttered hideous sounds, and foamed, and gnashed with his teeth, and was cast sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water, from which he was drawn with difficulty, and half dead. To bodily and mental distemper, occult and incurable, there was added demoniac possession, mingling itself with and adding new horrors to the terrible visitations. With the arrival of Christ and his disciples in this remote region there had come the fame of the wonderful cures that he had elsewhere effected ; cures, many of them, of the very same kind of malady with which this youth was so grievously afflicted. On learning that the company of Galilean strangers had arrived in the neighborhood of his own dwelling, the father of this youth thought that the time had come of relief from that heavy domestic burden that for years he had been bearing. He brought

to them his son. Unfortunately, it so happened that he brought him when Christ and the three disciples were up in the mountain, and the nine were left behind. It was to them, therefore, that the application for relief was made. It does not appear that when in company with Christ the disciples were in the habit of claiming or exercising any preternatural power over disease. No case at least of a cure effected by their hands in such circumstances is recorded. But in that short experimental tour, when they had been sent out away from him to go two by two through Galilee, Jesus had given them power over unclean spirits—a power which they had exercised without check or failure. And now, when they are left alone, and this most painful case is brought to them, they imagine that the same power is in their hands, and they essay to exercise it. In their Master's name again and again they command that unclean spirit to go forth, but their words return to them void. They stand baffled and covered with confusion before the crowd that had gathered to witness the cure. They can give no reason, for they know none, why the failure had taken place. Nor are they suffered to skulk away in their defeat. Some scribes

are there ready enough to take advantage of the awkward dilemma into which they have been thrown by assuming an authority which turns out to be impotent—their Master's character involved in their defeat. We can well imagine what an instrument of reproach would be put thus into the hands of these scribes, and how diligently and effectively they would employ it ; pressing the disciples with questions to which they could give no satisfactory replies, and turning the whole occurrence to the best account in the way of casting discredit upon the Master, as well as upon his disciples. A great multitude had in the meantime assembled ; a profane, and scoffing, and half-malignant spirit had been stealing into the hearts of many, when Jesus and the three are seen coming down from the hill-side. The suddenness of his appearance—his coming at the very time that his disciples were hard pressed, perhaps, too, the very calmness and majesty of his appearance, as some of that glory of the mountain-top still lingers around him—produces a quick revolution of feeling in the fickle multitude. Straightway a kind of awe—half admiration, half alarm—comes over them, and “greatly amazed,” they leave the scribes and

the discomfited disciples, and they run to him and salute him—not in mockery, certainly, or hailing him as one whose claims upon their homage they are ready to set aside—but rather with a rebound from their recent incredulity, prepared to pay to him the profounder respect. And now, as on some battle-field which subordinate officers have entered in absence of their chief, and in which they have been worsted by the foe, at the crisis of the day the chief himself appears, and at once the tide of battle turns—so acts the presence of Christ. Bearing back with him the multitude that had run forth to greet him, he comes up to where the scribes are dealing with the apostles, and says to them, “What question ye with them?” The questioners are struck dumb—stand silent before the Lord. In the midst of the silence a man comes forward, kneels down before Jesus, tells him what has happened, how fearful the malady was that had fallen upon his only child, how he had brought the child to his disciples and they had failed to cast the devil out of him. Too much occupied with his own grief, too eager to seize the chance now given, that the Master may do what his disciples could not, he makes no mention of the scribes or of

the hostile feeling against him they have been attempting to excite. But Jesus knows it all, sees how in all the various regions then around him, in the hearts of the people who speak to him, in the hearts of the disciples from whom he had temporarily been parted, in the hearts of those scribes who had been indulging in an unworthy and premature triumph, the spirit of incredulity had been acting. Contemplating the sad picture of prevailing unbelief, there bursts from his lips the mournful ejaculation, "O faithless, incredulous, and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you and you remain ignorant of who and what I am? How shall I suffer you, as you continue to exhibit such want of trust in my willingness and power to help and save you?" Not often does Christ give us any insight into the personal emotions stirred up within his heart by the scenes among which he moves—not often does there issue from his lips anything approaching to complaint. Here for a moment, out of the fullness of his heart he speaketh, revealing as he does so a fountain-head of sorrow lying deep within his soul, the fullness and bitterness of whose waters, as they were so constantly rising up to flood and overflow his spirit,

who can gauge? What must it have been for Jesus Christ to come into such close familiar contact with the misconceptions and incredulities, and dislikes and oppositions of the men he lived among? With a human nature like our own, yet far more exquisitely sensitive than ours to injustice and false reproach, what a constant strain and burden must thus have been laid upon his heart! What an incalculable amount of patience must it have called him to exercise!

The brief lament over the faithless and perverse generation uttered, Jesus says to the father, "Bring thy son hither." And now follows a scene to which there are few parallels in scriptural or in any other story, for our vivid conception of which we are specially indebted to the graphic pen of the second Evangelist. They go for the youth and bring him. So soon as he comes into the presence of Jesus, and their eyes meet, whether it was that the calm, benignant, heavenly look of Christ operated as a kind of stimulant upon a worn-out, weak, unstrung, excitable, nervous system, or that the devil, knowing that his time was short, would raise one last and vehement commotion within that poor distracted frame, the youth

falls to the ground, wallowing, foaming, torn by a power he is unable to resist. Jesus looks upon him as he lies, and all who are around look at Jesus, wondering what he will do. Is it easy to imagine a conjunction of outward circumstances more striking or affecting? The youth writhing on the ground, Jesus bending on him a look of ineffable pity, the father standing on the tip-toe of eager expectation, the disciples, the scribes, the multitude, pressing on to witness the result. Such was the season, such were the circumstances, that Jesus chose for one of the shortest but most memorable of his conversations. Before he says or does anything as to the son, he says, quietly, inquiringly, compassionately, to the father: "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" The father tells how long, and tells how terrible it has been; but as if somewhat impatient at such a question being put at such a time, he adds, "But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Genuine and pathetic utterance of a deep-smitten fatherly affection, identifying itself with the object of its love, and intent upon the one thing of getting that child cured; all right here in the father's feeling toward his son, but

something wrong, something defective in the feeling toward Christ, which for the man's own sake, and for his son's sake, and for the sake of that gathered crowd, and for the sake of us, and of all who shall ever read this narrative, Jesus desired to seize upon this opportunity to correct. "If thou canst do anything," the father says. "If thou canst believe," is our Lord's quick reply. 'It is not, as thou takest it, a question as to the extent of my power, but altogether of the strength of thy faith, for if thou canst but believe, all things are possible, this thing can easily be done.' Receiving the rebuke in the spirit in which it was given, awaking at once to see and believe that it was his want of faith that stood in the way of his son's cure, sensible that he had been wrong in challenging Christ's power, that Christ was right in challenging his faith, with a flood of tears that told how truly humble and broken his spirit was, the man cries out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Who is not grateful to the man who lets us see into that tumult and agony of soul in which true faith is born, how it is that out of the dull and fearful spirit of mistrust the genuine child-like confidence of the heart in Jesus struggles in?

being. "Lord, I believe." "I have a trust in thee. I know that thou hast all power at thy command, and canst exercise it as thou wilt. But when I look at that which this power of thine is now called to do, my faith begins to falter. Lord, help mine unbelief. Thou only canst do it. Thou only canst strengthen this weak and failing heart of mine. It is thine to cure the bodily distemper of my son. It is thine to heal the spiritual infirmities of my soul.' What a mixture here of weakness and strength—the cry for help betraying the one, yet in that very cry the other standing revealed! Few utterances that have come from human lips have carried more in them of the spirit that we should all seek to cherish, nor would it be easy to calculate how many human beings have taken up the language this man taught them to employ, and who have said to Jesus, "Lord, we believe ; help thou our unbelief."

In answer to this confession and this prayer, something still further might have been said, had not our Lord perceived a fresh pressure in upon them of the neighboring crowd, at sight of which he delayed no longer, but, turning to him who still lies upon the ground before him, in words of sternness and decision he says,

“Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him.” A fresh cry of agony—a last and most violent convulsion—and the poor afflicted youth lies stretched out so motionless, that many, looking at him, say that he is dead. But Jesus takes him by the hand and lifts him up, and delivers him perfectly cured to his glad and grateful father. The work was done, the crowd dispersed, “all amazed at the mighty power of God.”

Afterwards, when alone with him in the house, the apostles asked Jesus why it was that they could not cast the devil out. He told them that it was because of their unbelief. They had suffered perhaps that late announcement which he had made to them of his impending sufferings and death to dim or disturb their faith, or they had allowed that still more recent selection of the three, and his withdrawal from them up into the mountain, to engender a jealousy which weakened that faith. One way or other, their faith had given way, and in its absence they had tried the power of their Master's name, in the hope that it might act as a charm or talisman. Jesus would have them know that it was not thus that his name was

rightly, or could ever effectively, be employed. Yet at the same time he would have them know that the kind of spirit by which this youth had been possessed was one not easy of ejection—which required, in fact, on the part of the ejector, such a faith as could only be reached by much prayer and fasting ; teaching them thus, in answer to their inquiry, the double lesson—that the primary source of their failure lay in the defect of their faith ; and that the manner in which that faith could alone be nourished up to the required degree of strength was by fasting and by prayer, by weaning themselves from the pursuits and enjoyments of sense, by repeated and earnest supplications to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, whose office it is to work in his people the work of faith with power. At the same time Jesus took the opportunity which this private interview with his disciples afforded—as he had taken the opportunity of his interview with the importunate father—to proclaim the great power, the omnipotence of faith.* This obviously was the one great lesson which, in this passage of his earthly history, Jesus designed to teach.

Sudden and very striking must have been the transition from the brightness, the blessedness of that sublime communion with Moses and Elias on the mount, to the close contact with human misery in the shape of the possessed lunatic who lay writhing at his feet ; so sharp and impressive the contrast that the prince of painters, in his attempt to picture to our eye the glories of the Transfiguration, has thrown in the figure of the suffering child at the base of the mountain. But more even than by this contact with human misery does our Saviour seem on this occasion to have been impressed by his coming into such close contact with so many forms of human unbelief. And he appears to have framed and selected this as the first occasion on which to announce, not only the need and the benefit, but the illimitable power of faith.

He could easily have arranged it so that no application had been made to his disciples in his absence, but then they had wanted the lesson the failure carried in its bosom. He could easily have cured the maniac boy at once and by a word ; but then this father had missed that lesson which, in the short preliminary conversation with him, was conveyed. And through

both, to us and to all, the great truth is made known that in this world of sin and sorrow the prime necessity is, that we should have faith in God and faith in Jesus Christ—not a faith in certain truths or propositions about God or about Jesus Christ—but simple, child-like trust in God as our Father, in Jesus as our Saviour ; a faith that will lead us in all times of our weakness and exposure, and temptation and distress, to fly to them to succor us, casting ourselves upon a help that never was refused to those who felt their need of it. Neither for our natural nor for our spiritual life is the physical removal of mountains necessary : if it were, we believe that it would be given in answer to believing prayer ; but mountains of difficulty there are, moral and spiritual, which do need to be removed ere our way be made plain, and we be carried smoothly and prosperously along it ; corruptions within us to be subdued : temptations without us to overcome. These must be met, and struggled with, and overcome. It is by the might and mastery of faith and prayer that this can alone be accomplished. And it is no small comfort for us to be assured, on the word of our Lord himself, that though our faith be small in bulk as the

mustard seed, yet if it be genuine, if it humbly yet firmly take hold of the mighty power of God and hang upon it, it will avail to bring that power down to our aid and rescue, so that, weak as we are in ourselves, and strong as the world is to overcome us, yet greater shall he be that is with us than he that is in the world, and we shall be able to do all things through him who strengtheneth us. Prayer, it has been said, moves him who moves the universe. But it is faith which gives to prayer the faculty of linking itself in this way with Omnipotence, and calling it to human aid. And so you find that, in one of the other two instances in which Jesus made use of the same expressions as to the power of faith which he employed upon this occasion, he coupled faith and prayer together. "Master," said Peter, wondering at the effect which a single word of Jesus had produced,—“Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering said unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he

shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Wonderful words, assigning an all-embracing, an absolutely unlimited efficacy to faith and prayer—words not to be lightly judged of, as if they were intended to encourage the rash and the ignorant conceits and confidences of a presumptuous enthusiasm—but words of truth and soberness, notwithstanding the width and compass of their embrace, if only we remember that true faith will confide in God, or Christ, only for that as to which he invites, and so warrants, its confidence ; and true prayer will ask for that alone which is agreeable to the will of God, and will promote the spiritual and eternal good of him upon whom it is bestowed. These are the conditions—natural and reasonable—which underlie all that Christ has said of the power of faith and prayer. And within these conditions we accept all that he has said as true in itself, and wanting only a firmer faith, and a more undoubting prayer than we have exercised or put forth, to receive its fulfillment in our own experience.

II.

THE PAYMENT OF THE TRIBUTE MONEY—THE
STRIFE AS TO WHO SHOULD BE GREATEST IN
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.*

FROM his retirement in the neighborhood of Cæsarea-Philippi, Jesus returned to Galilee—not, however, to resume his public ministry there. He sought privacy now, even among the scenes of his former labors—a privacy that he wished to consecrate to the further enlightenment of the twelve as to his own character and office, and the true nature of the kingdom he came to institute.† It was in fulfillment of this purpose that on the way from the scene of the Transfiguration to his old haunts about Capernaum, he made a second announcement of his impending death and resurrection, adding to the details of his passion

* Matt. xvii. 22-27 ; xviii. 1-35 ; Mark ix. 33-41 ; Luke ix. 43-50.

† Mark ix. 30, 31.

formerly given that of his betrayal. So hid was the meaning of Christ's words, that all that the apostles appear to have derived from them was a vague impression that some great and decisive event, in their Master's history were drawing near, in contemplation of which they began disputing among themselves which should be greatest in the kingdom which they hoped to see so soon set up—keeping, as they imagined, their disputings about this topic concealed from Christ.

On their arrival at Capernaum the persons appointed to receive the annual tribute which was paid for the support of the Temple services, came to Peter and said to him, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" Those who put this question were not the publicans or ordinary tax-gatherers who levied the dues laid upon the Jews by their governors the Romans. Nor was the question one about the payment of any common tax, any civil impost. The very form of the question, had it been literally rendered, would have indicated this, "Doth not your Master pay the didrachma?" a modern coin then in circulation, equivalent in value to the old half-shekel, which, having gone out of use, had become rare. Every Jew of twenty

years old and upward was required to give a half-shekel yearly for the maintenance first of the Tabernacle, and afterwards of the Temple. Although this payment was legally imposed, it does not appear to have been enforced by civil pains or penalties. It was left rather, like other of the Mosaic imposts, to the spontaneous action of conscience, and a good-will towards the theocracy on the part of the people. It was to the payment of this didrachma or half-shekel for the upholding of the Temple and its ordinances, that the question put to St. Peter referred. It is impossible for us to say positively in what spirit or with what motive the question was put. It certainly was not the question of the lynx-eyed collectors of the ordinary revenue, detecting an attempted evasion of the payment of one or other of the common taxes. From no civil obligation laid upon him by law did Jesus ever claim to be exempt, nor would the argument which he used afterwards with the apostle, embodying a claim to exemption in this case, have been applicable to any such obligation. But why did those to whom the gatherers of this ecclesiastical impost was intrusted speak as they did to St. Peter? Was it from doubt or ignorance

on their part as to whether Jesus ought to be asked or now meant to pay this tax? Priests, Levites, prophets, some tell us, that even Rabbis were held to be free from this payment. Had Christ's retirement now from public duty suggested the idea that he had thrown aside that character under which immunity might have been claimed by him, and that he might be called upon therefore to submit to all the ordinary obligations under which every common inhabitant of the country was laid? Or was this a piece of rude impertinence on the part of the under officials of the hierarchy, who, seeing this disfavor into which Jesus had sunk with their superiors, were quick to take advantage of their commission to obtrude a question that seemed to cast some reproach on Christ as if he were a defaulter? Some color is given to the supposition that it was in a sinister spirit that the inquiry was made, from the circumstance of St. Peter's prompt reply—a reply in which there may have been indignation at an implied suspicion, and a scorn at disputing about such a trifle—so that without any communication with Jesus he shuts the mouths of these gainsayers by saying, Yes; his Master paid or would pay the tribute.

HAD the tone in which the question was asked, and the apostle's reply was given, been known to us, we might have told whether it was so or not. As it is, it can only be a conjecture that it was in a hostile and malicious spirit that the collectors of the tribute-money acted. Peter, however, was too rash and hasty. It might be true enough that his Master had no desire to avoid that or any other service which he owed to the Temple and to its worship. It might be safe enough in him to undertake for his Master so trifling a payment, which, whether Jesus acquiesced in the engagement or not, the apostle could easily find the means for meeting. But in such an instant acknowledgment of the obligation there was an overlooking on Peter's part of the dignity of Christ's person, and of his position towards the Temple. To remind him of this oversight, to recall his attention to what was implied in his own recent confession at Cæsarea-Philippi, when they were come into the house, without waiting for any communication from Peter as to what had occurred, Jesus said to him, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"—those who are

not members of their own family—not sons, but subjects. Peter saith to him, “Of the latter, of strangers. Jesus saith to him, Then are the children free.” Upon this simple principle Christ would have Peter to recognize his immunity from that tribute which was now claimed—for was he not greater than the Temple? Did he not bear to that Temple the relation of the son in the house of his Father? And did he not as such stand free from all the obligations which the King and Lord of that house had laid upon his servants, his subjects? It will not be easy to show any pertinence assumed in the plea for immunity thus presented, without admitting the altogether peculiar relationship in which Christ stood to the Father. Accept the truth of his divine Sonship to the Father, and the plea holds good; reject that truth, and the plea seems weak and void. And was it not for the purpose of still further illustrating that very Sonship to God which Peter for the moment had forgotten, that our Lord directed him to do that which in the issue carried with it so remarkable a proof that in the Great Temple of the visible creation Jesus was not a servant but a son; that everywhere within and over that house he ruled; that all

things there were ready to serve him—the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,—seeing that at Christ's bidding one of the latter was to be ready to grasp at Peter's hook, and on being taken up was to have in its mouth the stater, the four-drachm piece, the very sum required from two persons for the yearly Temple tax? It is as viewed in this connection that a miracle which otherwise would look needless and undignified—out of keeping with the general character of our Lord's great works, all of which in some way have something more than mere exhibiting of power—takes rank with all the rest as illustrative of the high character and office of the Redeemer. It was not want which forced our Lord upon this forth-putting of his divinity. Even had the bag which Judas carried been for the moment empty, the sum required to meet this payment was not so large but that it could easily have been otherwise procured; but in the manner in which the need was met Jesus would set forth that character on the ground of which he might have claimed immunity,—throwing over the depths of his earthly poverty the glory of his divine riches, and making it manifest how easy it had been for him to have

laid all nature under contribution to supply all his wants. Yet another purpose was served by this incident in our Saviour's life. In point of time it harmonizes with the first occasions on which Jesus began to speak of that Church, that separate society which was to spring forth out of the bosom of Judaism, and to take the place of the old theocracy. Had he, without explanation made, at once ratified the engagement that Peter made for him, it might have been interpreted as an acknowledgment of his subjection to the customs and laws of the old covenant. That no offence might be taken—taken in ignorance by those who were ignorant of the ground upon which immunity from this payment on his part might have been asserted—he was willing to do as Peter said he would. In this it became him to fulfill all the righteousness of the law, but even in doing so he will utter in private his protest, and in the mode wherein that protest is embodied convey beforehand no indistinct intimation that a breach was to take place between the Temple service and the new community of the free of which he was to be the Head.

It is extremely difficult to determine what the exact order of events was on the arrival at

Capernaum. If it were while they were on the way to the house—most likely that of Peter, in which Jesus took up his abode—that the collectors of the Temple tax made their application, then the first incident after the arrival would be the short conversation with Simon, and the despatching him to obtain the stater from the fish's mouth upon the lake. In Peter's absence, and after they had entered the house, Jesus may have said to his disciples, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" They were so struck by surprise, had been so certain that their Master had not overheard the dispute that had taken place, that they had no answer to give to his inquiry. Meanwhile, Peter has returned from his errand, and reported its result, while they in turn report to him the inquiry that had been made of them. Let us remember here that up to the time of the arrival in the neighborhood of Cæsarea-Philippi, no instance is on record of any controversy having arisen among the personal attendants on Christ as to the different positions they were to occupy in his kingdom. All had hitherto been so vague and indefinite as to the time and manner of the institution of the kingdom, that all conjecture

or anticipation as to their relative places therein had been kept in abeyance. Now, however, they see a new tone and manner in their Master. He speaks of things—they do not well know what—which are about to occur in Jerusalem. He tells them that there were some of them standing there before him which should not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God. Which of them could it be for whom such honor was in reserve? He takes Peter and James and John up with him to the mount, and appears there before them in so new an aspect, invested with such a strange and exceeding glory, that the privilege of being present at such a spectacle must have appeared to the three as a singular distinction conferred upon them. They were not to tell the others what they had seen, but they could scarcely fail to tell them they had seen something wonderful beyond anything that had happened in our Lord's wonderful life, which they were not permitted to reveal. Would not the seal of secrecy so imposed enhance in their estimation the privilege which had been conferred on them, and would it not in the same degree be apt to awaken a jealousy on the part of the nine? At the very time, then,

that they all began to look out for the coming of the kingdom as near at hand, by the materials thus supplied for pride with some, for envy with the rest, an apple of discord was thrown in among the twelve. They were but men of like passions with ourselves. They had as yet no other notion of the kingdom that was shortly to appear than that it would be a temporal one; that their Master was to become a powerful and victorious prince, with places, honors, wealth, at his command. And what more natural than that they whom he had chosen to be confidential attendants in the days of his humiliation should be then signally exalted and rewarded? Such being their common expectations, any mark of partiality on Christ's part would be particularly noted; and what more natural than that such a signal one as that bestowed upon the three, in their being chosen as the only witnesses of the Transfiguration, should have stirred up the strife by the way as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

This first outbreak of selfishness and pride and ambition and envy and strife, among his chosen companions, was a great occasion in the sight of Jesus. It might and it did spring in a

large extent from ignorance, and, with the removal of that ignorance, might be subdued; but it might and it did spring from sources which, after fullest knowledge had been conveyed of what the kingdom was and wherein *its* distinctions lay, might still have power to flood the Church with a whole host of evils. Therefore it was that Jesus would signalize this occasion by words and an act of particular impressiveness. Peter had returned from the lake-side with the stater in his hand to pay for himself and for Jesus. The others told him of the questions that had been put to them, and of the silence they had observed. As they do so, this new instance of Peter's selection for a separate service stirs the embers of their former strife, and in their curiosity and impatience one of them is bold enough to say to Jesus, "Who is or shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus sits down, calls the twelve that they might be all around him, and says to them,—“If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last.” “If any man, actuated by selfish, covetous, ambitious motives, seek to be first in my kingdom, he shall be last—the very efforts that he shall make to climb to the highest elevation there being of their very nature

such as shall plunge him to the lowest depths. But if any man would be first within that kingdom, first in goodness, first in usefulness, first in honor there, let him be last, willing to be the servant of others, ready to esteem others better than himself, prepared to take any place, to make any sacrifice, to render any service, provided only that others' welfare be thereby advanced. In humbling himself so, that man shall be exalted. I give to this great truth a visible and memorable representation.' Jesus called a little child to him, set him in the midst, then took him into his arms, and said,—“ Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” ‘Ye are fighting about places, power, pre-eminence in my kingdom ; but I tell you that the selfishness, the pride, the ambition, out of which all such strife emerges, are so wholly alien from the nature of that kingdom which I have come to introduce and establish, that unless you be changed in spirit, and become meek, humble, teachable, submissive as this little child which I now hold so gently in my arms, ye cannot enter into that kingdom, much less rise to places of distinction there. You wish to know who shall be great-

est in that kingdom. It shall not be the wisest, the wealthiest, the most powerful, but whosoever shall most humble himself, and in humility be likest to this little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' 'If that be true,' we can fancy the apostles thinking and saying, 'if all personal distinction and pre-eminence must be renounced by us, if in seeking to be first we must be last, and each be the servant of all the others, what then will become of our official influence and authority—who will receive and obey us as thy representatives?' Our Lord's reply is this—'Your true and best reception as my ambassadors does not depend upon the external rank you hold, or the official authority with which you may be clothed. It depends upon your own personal qualities as humble, loving, devoted followers of me. This is true of you and of all ; for whosoever receiveth one such little child—one of these little ones which believe in me, in my name—receiveth me ; and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me but him that sent me.'

This new idea about receiving the least of Christ's little ones in Christ's name, awakens in the breast of one of his auditors a troubling remembrance. John recollects that he and some

others of the disciples had once seen a man casting out devils in the name of Christ, and that they had forbidden him to do so, because, as they thought, he had no authority to do so, had received no commission, was not even openly a follower of Jesus. Somewhat in doubt now, after what he has heard, as to whether they had been right in doing so, he states the case to Jesus, and gets at once the distinct and emphatic "Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." John had judged this man rashly and severely, had counted him guilty of presumption in attempting, whilst standing outside the circle of Christ's acknowledged friends and followers, to do anything in his name; had doubted or disbelieved that he was a disciple of or a believer in Jesus. Full of the spirit of officialism, in the pride of his order as one of the selected twelve, to whom alone, as he imagined, the power of working miracles in Christ's name had been committed, John had interfered to arrest his procedure,—acting thus as the young man and as Joshua did, of whom we read in the Book of Numbers, "And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

And Joshua the son of Nun, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses, in the very spirit of Christ, said, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"* "Forbid him not," said Jesus. 'His doing a miracle in my name is a far better evidence of his cherishing a real trust in me, being one of mine, than any external position or official rank that he could occupy. Be not hasty in deciding as to who are and who are not my genuine disciples; for while that is true which I taught you when I was speaking of those who alleged that I cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, that "he that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad,"† it is no less true that "he that is not against us is on our part." Neither of the two sayings, indeed, can be universally and unlimitedly applied; but there are circumstances in which absence of open hostility may of itself be taken as evidence of friendship; and there are circumstances in which absence of open friendship may of itself be taken as evidence of hostility. Instead of overlooking,

* Numbers xi. 27, 29.

† Matt. xii. 30.

as they had done, such a strong conclusive evidence as that of working miracles in Christ's name, John and the others should have been ready, as their Master was, to recognize the slightest token of attachment. "For whosoever," added Jesus, "shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward."

"The beginning of strife," the wise man said, "is as when one letteth out water." And that beginning of strife among the apostles of Christ as to which of them should be greatest, what a first letting out was it of those bitter waters of contention, envy, and all uncharitableness, which the centuries since Christ's time have seen flooding the church—its members struggling for such honors and emoluments, or, when these were but scanty, for such authority and influence as ecclesiastical offices and positions could confer! Slow, indeed, has that society which bears his name been of learning the lesson which, first in precept, and then in his own exalted example, the Saviour left behind him, that "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

We have had before us the first of the two instances in which John was led away by a fiery and intemperate zeal—in this instance, to misjudge and condemn one who, though he had not faith nor fortitude enough to leave all and follow Jesus, yet had faith enough to enable him to work miracles in Christ's name. It is not told us how John took the check which Jesus laid upon that spirit of officialism and fanaticism which had been working in his breast. But we do know how thoroughly that spirit was at last subdued in the heart of the meekest and most loving of the twelve, and how he moved afterward through his fellow-men with step of Christ-like gentleness, and became "the guardian spirit of the little ones of the kingdom."

III.

CHRIST AND HIS BRETHREN.*

WE like to follow those who by their sayings and doings have filled and dazzled the public eye, into the seclusion of their homes. We like to see such men in their undress, when, all restraint removed, their peculiarities of character are free to exhibit themselves in the countless artless ways and manners of daily domestic life. It brings them so much nearer to us, gives us a closer hold of them, makes us feel more vividly their kinship to us, to know how they did the things that we have all every day to do, how they comported themselves in the circumstances in which we all every day are placed. Great pains have been taken by biographers of distinguished men to gratify this desire. Quite apart, indeed, from any object of this kind, we could scarcely sit

* John vii. 1-9.

down to write out an account of what we saw and heard in the course of two or three years' close intercourse with a friend, without dropping many a hint as to the minor modes and habits of his life.

Is there nothing remarkable in the entire absence of anything of this kind in the narrative of the four Evangelists? Engrossed with what they tell us, we think not of what they have left untold; think not, for example, that they have left no materials for gratifying the desire that we have spoken of—one so natural and so strong. It is, as if in writing these narratives a strong bias of our nature had been put under restraint. They say not a word about the personal appearance of their Master; there is nothing for the painter or sculptor to seize on. They give us no details of his private and personal habits, of any peculiarities of look or speech or gesture, of the times or ways of his doing this thing or that. St. Mark, the most graphic describer of the four, tells us once or twice of a particular look or motion of our Lord, but not so as to indicate anything distinctive in their manner. Why this silence? Why thus withhold from us all means of forming a vivid conception of the Redeemer's per-

sonal appearance, and of following him through the details of his more familiar daily intercourse with the twelve? Was it that the materials were wanting, that there were no personal peculiarities about Jesus Christ, that inwardly and outwardly all was so nicely balanced, all was in such perfect harmony and proportion, that as in his human intellect and human character, there was nothing to distinguish him individually from his fellow-men,—nothing, I mean, of that kind by which all the individual intellects and characters are each specially characterized—so even in the minor habits of his life there was nothing distinctive to be recorded? Or was it that the veil has been purposely drawn over all such materials, to check all that superstitious worship of the senses, which might have gathered round minute pictures of our Lord in the acts and habits of his daily life? If, even as it is, the passion for such worship has made the food for itself to feed upon, and, living upon that food, has swelled out into such large proportions, what should it have been if such food had from the first been provided? Is it not well that the image of our Lord in his earthly life, while having the print of our humanity so clearly

and fully impressed upon it, should yet be lifted up and kept apart, and all done that could be done to keep it from being sullied by such rude, familiar, irreverent regard?

What is true of our Lord's habits generally, is true of his religious habits—of the time and manner in which religious duties were performed. We know something of the manner in which these duties were discharged by a truly devout Jew of Christ's age, of the daily washings before meals, and the frequent fastings, and the repeated and long prayers, of the attendance at the synagogue, and the regular going up to the great feasts at Jerusalem. Some of these Jesus appears to have neglected. The scribes and the Pharisees came to him saying, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread."* Again they came to him with another similar complaint, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink?" These charges are brought nominally against the disciples, who only followed the example of their

* Matt. xv. 2.

Master. He neglected the ordinary ablutions to which in Jewish eyes a sacred character attached. He himself did not fast, and he taught his disciples that when they did so it was to be in such a manner that men might not know that they were fasting. Of the times and the manner in which our Lord's private devotions were conducted, how little is revealed! You read of his rising up a great while before day, and retiring into a solitary place to pray.* You read of his sending the multitude away and going up into a mountain to pray; of his continuing all night in prayer.† You read of special acts of devotion connected with his baptism, his transfiguration, his agony in the garden, his suffering on the cross. We know that it was by him, and him alone, of all the children of men, that the precept "pray without ceasing" was fully and perfectly kept—kept by its being in the spirit of prayer that his whole life was spent,—but when we ask what Christ's daily habit was, how often each day did he engage in specific acts of devotion, and how, when he did so, were these acts performed—

* Mark i. 35.

† Matt. xiv. 23 ; Luke vi. 12.

did he retire each morning and evening from his disciples to engage in prayer? did he daily, morning and evening pray with and for his disciples?—the Evangelists leave us without an answer. The single thing they tell us, and it conveys but little precise information, is, that “it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”* This took place during the last six months of our Lord’s ministry. It looks as if the disciples had come upon their Master when engaged in his solitary devotions, and had been so struck with what they saw and heard, that one of them, when the prayer was over, could not help asking him to teach them to pray. Remembering that this happened at so late a period in their intercourse with him, does it not seem as if Jesus had not been in the habit of daily leading their devotions? The very difficulty that we feel in understanding how at such a time such a question came to be put to him, shows us what a blank there is here in the evangelic narrative,

* Luke xi. 1.

and how ignorant we must be content to remain.

If the generally accepted chronology of our Lord's life be the true one—and we see no reason to reject it—we are not left in such ignorance as to how another of the religious duties practised at the time by those around him was discharged by Christ. His ministry in Galilee lasted eighteen months. During this period four of the great annual religious festivals which the Jews were enjoined to attend had taken place at Jerusalem—two Pentecosts, one Passover, and one Feast of Tabernacles,—at none of which Jesus appeared. There was indeed a reason for his absence, grounded on the state of feeling against him existing in Jerusalem, and the resolution already taken by the Jewish leaders there to cut him off by death. Till his work in Galilee was completed he would not place himself in the circumstances which would inevitably lead on to that doom being executed. But who of all around him knew of that or any other good or sufficient reason for his absenting himself from these sacred festivals? And to them what a perplexing fact must that absence have appeared! Altogether, when you take the entire attitude, bearing, and con-

duct of Jesus Christ as to their ablutions, their fastings, their prayers, their keeping of the Sabbath, their attendance at the feasts, it is not difficult to imagine what an inexplicable mystery he must have been to the great majority of his countrymen. I do not speak now of the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, of whom his teaching and his life was one continued rebuke, and who hated him with a deadly hatred from the first, but of the many sincerely devout, superstitiously religious Jews amongst whom he lived. What a perfect puzzle to such the character and career of this man Christ Jesus—one speaking so much and in such a way of God and of godliness, proclaiming the advent of God's own kingdom on the earth, unfolding its duties, its privileges, its blessednesses, yet to their seeming so neglectful, so undevout, so irreligious! We may not be able now thoroughly to put ourselves in these men's position—thoroughly to understand with what kind of eyes it was that they looked upon that wonderful spectacle which the life of Jesus pressed upon their vision; but we should be capable of discerning the singular and emphatic protest which that life was ever raising against all mere formal piety, the piety of times and seasons

and ordinances, the religion of rule and of routine.

But let us now rejoin our Lord. He is once more at Capernaum, or in its neighborhood. A year and a half has elapsed since he joined the bands in company with whom he had gone up to Jerusalem to keep the second Passover after his baptism. It is autumn, and all around are busy in preparing for their journey to the capital to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. But he exhibits no intention to accompany them. He is going apparently to treat this festival as he had done the four which preceded it. What others thought of his behavior in this respect we are left to conjecture. His brethren, however—those who were either his actual brothers or his cousins—the members of that household in which he had been brought up—could not let the opportunity pass without telling him what they thought of his conduct. He and they had latterly been separated. They did not believe in him. They did not rank themselves among his disciples. Yet uninterested spectators of what had been going on in Galilee they could not remain. Now that Joseph was dead, he was the head of their family, and they could not but feel that

their position and prospects were in some way linked with his. Somewhat proud they could not but be that he had excited such great attention, done such wonderful works, drawn after him such vast crowds. At first, with all their incredulity, they were half inclined to hope that some great future was in store for him. One who spake so highly and with such authority as he did, who claimed and exercised such power, what might he not be and do in a community so peculiarly placed, so singularly excitable as the Jewish one then was? He might even prove to be the Messiah, the great princely leader of the people, for whom so many were waiting. Against that was the whole style and character of his teaching—in which, instead of there being anything addressed to the social or political condition of the people, anything fitted to stir up the spirit of Jewish pride and independence, there was everything calculated to soothe and subdue—to lead the thoughts and hopes of the people in quite other than earthly channels. Against it, too, there was the fact, becoming more apparent as the months ran on, that the natural leaders of the community—the scribes and Pharisees—by and through whom it could only be

that any great civil emancipation could be effected, were uniting against him in a bond of firmer and fiercer hostility. Even the crowds of the common people, which had at first surrounded him, were latterly declining, offended at the way in which he was beginning to speak of himself—telling them that except they ate his flesh and drank his blood they had no life in them. Emboldened by all this to use the old familiarity to which in other days they had been accustomed, his brethren come to him and say, “Depart hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly: if thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.” Imputing to him the common motives by which all worldly, selfish, ambitious men are animated, they taunt him with weakness and folly. Who that possessed such powers as he did would be satisfied with turning them to such poor account? If he were what he seemed, was he to hide himself forever among these hills of Galilee, and not go up boldly to the capital, and wrest from the rulers the acknowledgment of his claims? It was but a pitiful success to draw

after him some thousands of a gaping multitude, who followed him because they ate of the bread that he furnished and were filled—all whose faith in him was exhausted in wondering at him as the worker of such miracles. Let him, if he had the spirit of a true courage in him—if he was fit to take the leadership of the people—let him aim at once at far higher game, place himself at once in the centre of influence at Jerusalem, and show himself to the world. Then if on that broad theatre he made his pretensions good, it would be some honor to claim connection with him, some benefit to be enrolled as his followers.

How true is all this to that spirit of a mere earthly prudence and policy by which the lives of multitudes are regulated! Christ's own brothers judge of him by themselves. They cannot conceive but that he must desire to make the most for his own benefit and aggrandizement of whatever gifts he possessed. They count it to be weak in him, or worse, that he will not do the most he can in this way and for this end. They measure all by outward and visible success. And if success of that kind be not realized, all the chances and opportunities that are open to him they regard as thrown

away and lost. In speaking thus to Jesus they sever themselves by a wide interval from their great relative. He was not of this world. Unselfish, unworldly were all his motives, aims, and ends. They are of the world, and true children of the world they are, in thus addressing him, proving themselves to be. And this they must be told at least, if they will not effectually be taught. It was in a tone of assumed superiority that they had spoken to him when they prescribed the course he should pursue. How far above them does he rise, as, from that altitude whose very height hid it from their eyes, he calmly yet solemnly rolls back on them their rebuke—"My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto the feast. I go not up yet unto the feast, for my time is not yet full come." They would have him seize upon the opportunity of the approaching feast to show himself to the world, to win the world's favor and applause. This was their notion of human life. The stage upon which men play their parts here was in their eyes but as a mixed array of changes and chances upon which the

keen eye of selfishness should be always fixed, ready to grasp and make the most of them for purposes of personal aggrandizement. For such as they were the time was always ready. They had no other reckoning to make—no other star to steer by—than simply to discern when and how their selfish interests could be best promoted, and what their hands thus found to do, to do it with all their might. The world could not hate them, for they were of the world, and the world loveth its own. Let them court its favor, let them seek its pleasures, its honors, its profits, and the world would be pleased with the homage that was offered it, and if they but succeeded, they might count upon its applause, for men would praise them when they did well for themselves.* It was not so with Jesus, but utterly and diametrically the reverse. His was no life either of random impulses, of fitful accident, or of regulated self-seeking. The world he lived in was to him no antechamber, with doors of aggrandizement here and there around, for whose opening he was greedily to watch, that he might go in speedily and seize the prizes that lay beyond,

* Psalm xlix. 18.

before others grasped them. It was the place into which the Father had sent him to do there that Father's business, to finish the work there given him to do. And in the doing of that work there is to be no heat, no hurry, no impatience with him. The time, the hour for each act and deed was already settled in the purposes and ordinances of the Father. And the Father's time, the Father's hour were his, for which he was always ready calmly and patiently to wait. The world's hatred he counted on—he was prepared for. He knew what awaited him at Jerusalem. He knew what the hatred cherished against him there would finally and ere long effect; but he must not prematurely expose himself to it, nor suffer it to hasten by a single day the great decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. His time was coming—the time of his manifestation to Israel—of his showing forth to the world—a very different kind of manifestation from that of which his brethren were dreaming. But it was not yet fully come, and therefore he did not mean to go up to Jerusalem and openly to take part from the beginning as one of its celebrators in this approaching Feast of Tabernacles. This, in ways which we can easily

conjecture, but are not at liberty dogmatically to assert, would have interfered with the orderly evolution of the great event in which his earthly ministry was to close. But the time was fixed—that feast was drawing on—when his hour would come, and then it would be seen how the Son would glorify the Father and the Father be glorified in the Son.

And now let us remember that the sharp and vivid contrast drawn here by our Saviour's own truthful hand—between himself and his brethren according to the flesh—is the very same that he has taught us to draw between all his true disciples and the world. Let us listen to the description he gave of his own in that sublime intercessory prayer offered up on the eve of his agony, in that supper chamber in which the first communion was celebrated: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The Father did not need to know for whom his Son was then interceding. The Father did not need to have any description of their character given to him. Yet twice in that prayer did Jesus say of his true followers thus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." To know and and feel and act as he did; under the deep

abiding impression that, low as our lives are compared with his—small and insignificant as the ends are that any of us can accomplish—yet that our times, our ways, our doings, are all ordered by heavenly wisdom for heavenly ends ; that the tangled threads of our destiny are held by a Father's hand, to be woven into such patterns as to him seems best ; by the cross of our Redeemer—by the redemption that was by it wrought out for us—by the great example of self-sacrifice that was in it exhibited—by the love of him who died that he might live, to have the world crucified unto us, and we crucified to the world ;—to have the same mind in us that was in him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, who, though he was so rich, for our sakes became so poor, that we through his poverty might be rich :—this would be to realize the description that our Lord has left behind him of what all his true disciples ought to be, and in some measure are. As we take up and apply the test it supplies, how deeply may we all humble ourselves before him—under the consciousness of how slightly, how partially, if at all, the description is true of us !

IV.

CHRIST AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.*

GREAT national benefits, civil, social, and religious, were conferred upon the Jews by the ordinance that three times each year the whole adult population of the country should assemble at Jerusalem. The finest seasons of the year, spring and autumn, were fixed on for these gatherings of the people. The journeyings at such seasons of friends and neighbors, in bands of happy fellowship, must have been healthful and exhilarating. Separated as it was into clans or tribes, the frequent reunion of the entire community must have served to counteract and subdue any jealousies or divisions that might otherwise have arisen. The meeting together as children of a common progenitor, living under the same laws, heirs of the same promises, worshippers of the same

* John vii. 11-52.

God, must not only have cultivated the spirit of brotherhood and nationality, but have strengthened their faith and guarded from the encroachments of idolatry the worship of the country. Among the lesser advantages that these periodic assemblages brought along with them, they afforded admirable opportunities for the expression and interchange of the sentiments of the people on every subject that particularly interested them: what in our times the press and public meetings do, they did for the Jews. So far as we know, no nation of antiquity had such full and frequent means of testing and indicating the state of public feeling. Whatever topic had been engrossing the thoughts of the community would be sure to be the subject of general conversation in the capital the next time that the tribes assembled in Jerusalem. Remembering how fickle public feeling is, how difficult it is to fix it and keep it concentrated upon one subject for any considerable period, we may be certain that it was a subject singularly interesting—one which had taken a general and very strong hold of the public mind, that for a year and a half, during five successive festivals,

came up ever fresh upon the lips of the congregated thousands.

Yet it was so as to the appearance among them of Jesus Christ. Eighteen months had passed since he had been seen in Jerusalem, yet no sooner has the Feast of Tabernacles commenced than the Jews look everywhere around for him, and say, "Where is he?" The absence of one man among so many thousands might, we should think, have passed by unnoticed. The absence of this man is the subject of general remark. The people generally speak of him with bated breath, for it is well enough known that he is no favorite with the great men of the capital, and as they speak great discord of opinion prevails. It gives us, however, a very good idea of the extent and strength of the impression he had made upon the entire population of the country, that at this great annual gathering, and after so long an absence, he is instantly the object of search, and so generally the subject of conversation. Even while they were thus speaking of him he was on his way to Jerusalem. Travelling alone, or but slenderly escorted, and choosing an unfrequented route, so that no pre-intimation of his approach might reach the city, he

arrives about the middle of the feast, and throws off at once all attempt at concealment. Passing, as we might think, from the extreme of caution to the extreme of daring, he plants himself among the crowd in the Temple courts, and addresses them as one only of the oldest and most learned of the Rabbis might have ventured to do. Some of the rulers are there, but the suddenness of his appearance, the boldness of the step he takes, the manner of his speech, make them for the time forget their purpose. They can't but listen like the rest, but they won't give heed to the things about the divine kingdom that he is proclaiming. What strikes them most, and excites their wonder, is that he speaks so well, quotes the Scriptures, and shows himself so accurately acquainted with the law. "How knoweth this man letters," they say of him, "having never learned?" They would turn the thoughts of the people from what Jesus was saying to the consideration of his title and qualification to address them so. Who is this? in what school was he trained? at the feet of which of our great Rabbis did he sit? by what authority does he assume this office? Questions very natural for men full of all the proud and exclu-

sive spirit of officialism to put ; questions, by the very putting of which they would lower him in the estimation of the multitude and try to strip his teaching of its power. They give to Jesus the opportunity of declaring, " My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." " I am not addressing you either as a self-taught man, or one brought up in any of our schools. I am not addressing to you truths that I was taught by others, or have myself elaborated. Think not of me, who or what I am ; think of what I teach, receive it as coming, not from me, but from him who sent me. You ask about my credentials ; you would like to know what right I have to become a teacher of the people. There is a far simpler and better way of coming to a just conclusion about my teaching than the one that you are pointing to, and, happily, it is one that lies open unto all. If any man is truly willing to do the divine will ; if he wants to know what that will is in order that he may do it ; if that, in listening to my teaching, be his simple, earnest aim, he shall know of the doctrine that I am teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. No amount of native talent, no extent of school learning of any kind, will compensate

for the want of a pure and honest purpose. But if such a purpose be cherished, you shall see its end gained ; if your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light.' And still the saying of our Lord holds good, that in the search of truth, in the preserving us from error, in the guiding of us to right judgments about himself and his doctrine, the heart has more to do with the matter than the head—the willingness to do telling upon the capacity to know and to believe. Jesus asks that he himself be judged by this principle and upon this rule. What, in teaching, was his aim? Was it to display his talent, to win a reputation, to have his ideas adopted as being his?—was it to please himself, to show forth his own glory? How boldly does he challenge these critical observers to detect in him any symptom of self-seeking! With what a serene consciousness of the entire absence in himself of that element from which no other human heart was ever wholly free, does he say of himself, “He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.”

So much is said by Jesus to encourage all

truly desirous to know about him ; so much to vindicate himself against the adverse judgment of the rulers ; but how does all this apply to them ? Have they the willingness to do ? have they the purity and the unselfishness of purpose ? This feast of tabernacles was the one peculiarly associated with the reading of the law. "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law."* It is in presence of the very men whose duty it was to carry out this ordinance, that Jesus is now standing. From the first day they hated him, and from the time, now eighteen months ago, that he had cured the paralytic, breaking, as they thought, the Sabbath, and said that God was his father, making himself equal with God, they had resolved to kill him. This was the way—by cherishing hatred and the secret intent to mur-

* Deut. xxxi. 10-12.

der—that they were dealing with the law. Rolling their adverse judgment of him back upon themselves, and dragging out to light the purpose that in the meantime they would have kept concealed, Jesus said, “Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?” Those to whom that question is more immediately addressed have no answer to give to it; but in the crowd are those who, ignorant of the plot against the life of Jesus, yet sharing in the rulers’ contempt and hatred, say to him, “Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?” Christ stops not to deal with such a speech, but takes up at once what had furnished so painful a weapon in the hands of the Pharisees against him. He refers to that one deed still fresh in the minds of all those in Jerusalem. The offence of that one act of his in curing the impotent man on a Sabbath-day, had been made to overshadow all his other acts, to overbear all his other claims to attention and regard. “I have done one work,” he said, “and ye all marvel,” as if I thereby plainly proved myself a breaker of the Sabbath law. Formerly, before the Sanhedrim, he had defended himself against this charge of Sabbath-

breaking by other and higher arguments. Now addressing, as he does, the common people, he takes an instance familiar to them all. The Sabbath law runs thus: "Thou shalt do no work on the seventh day." How was this law to be interpreted? If the circumcision of a man on the seventh day was not a breach of it,—and no one thought it was,—what was to be said of the healing of a man upon that day? If ye on the Sabbath circumcise a man, and the law of Moses is not broken, why "are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day?" The analogy was so perfect, and the question so plain, that no reply was attempted. In the temporary silence that ensues, some of the citizens of Jerusalem who were aware of the secret resolution of the Sanhedrim, struck with wonder at what they now see and hear, cannot help saying, "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" We might imagine the words to have come from those who were ready themselves to see the very Christ in Jesus, but though they share not their rulers' persecuting spirit, these men have a prejudice

of their own. It had come to be a very general opinion about this time in Judea, that the Messiah was to have no common human origin, no father or mother, was to be raised from the dead beneath, or to come as an angel from the heavens. His not meeting this requirement is enough with these men to set aside the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. "Howbeit," they say, as men quite satisfied with the sureness of the ground on which they go, "Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then *cried* Jesus in the temple as he taught,"—such an easy and self-satisfied way of disposing of the whole question of his Messiahship, causing him to lift up his voice in loud and strenuous protest,—“Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am; and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.” The old and oft-repeated truth of his mission from the Father, coupled now with such a strong assertion of his own knowledge and of these men’s ignorance of who his Father was, that they are so irritated as to be disposed to proceed to violence; but upon them, as upon the rulers, there is a restraint:

“No man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.”

So impressed in his favor have many of the onlookers now become, that they are bold enough to say, “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?” As Jesus had done no miracles at this time in Jerusalem, the speakers obviously refer to what he had elsewhere wrought. Their speech is immediately reported to the Pharisees and Chief Priests sitting in council in an adjacent court of the Temple, who, so soon as they hear that the people are beginning to speak openly in his favor, send officers to take him. With obvious allusion to the errand on which these men come, as if to tell them how secure he felt, how sure he was that his comings and his goings in the future would be all of his own free will,—Jesus says, “Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come;” words very plain to us, but very dark to those who have no other interpretation to put upon them but that he may mean perhaps to leave Judea and go to the dispersed among the Gentiles. Little, however, as they were

understood, there was such a tone of quiet, yet sad assurance about them, that the high priests' officers are arrested, and return to give this to their employers as the reason why they had not executed the order given them, "Never man spake like this man."

So ended our Lord's first day of teaching in the Temple, a day revealing on his part a wisdom, a courage, a serene, sublime, untroubled trust which took his adversaries by surprise, and held all their deadly purposes against him in suspense—and on the part of the multitude the strangest mixture of conflicting opinions and sentiments, with which our Lord so dealt as to win exemption from like interruptions afterwards, and to secure for himself an unbroken audience on the day when his last and greatest words were spoken.

The Feast of Tabernacles was instituted to commemorate the time when the Israelites had dwelt in tents during their sojourn in the desert. To bring the remembrance of those long years of tent-life more vividly before them, the people were enjoined, during the seven days that it lasted, to leave their accustomed homes, and to dwell in booths or huts made of gathered branches of the palm, the pine, the myrtle, or

other trees of a like thick foliage. It must have been a strange spectacle when, on the day before the feast, the inhabitants of Jerusalem poured out from their dwellings, spread themselves over the neighborhood, stripped the groves of their leafiest branches, brought them back to rear them into booths upon the tops of their houses, along the leading streets, and in some of the outer courts of the Temple. The dull, square, stony aspect of the city suffered a singular metamorphosis as these leafy structures met everywhere the eye. It was the great Jewish harvest-home—for this feast was celebrated in autumn, after all the fruits of the earth had been gathered in. It was within the Temple that its joyous or thanksgiving character especially developed itself. Morning and evening, day by day, during sacrifices more crowded than those of any other of the great festivals, the air was rent with the praises of the rejoicing multitudes. At the time of the libation of water, the voice of their glad thanksgiving swelled up into its fullest and most jubilant expression. Each morning a vast procession formed itself around the little fountain of Siloam down in the valley of the Kedron. Out of its flowing waters the priests

filled a large golden pitcher. Bearing it aloft, they climbed the steep ascent of Moriah, passed through the water-gate, up the broad stairs and into the court of the Temple, in whose centre the altar stood. Before this altar two silver basins were planted, with holes beneath to let the liquid poured into them flow down into the subterranean reservoir beneath the Temple, to run out thence into the Kedron, and down into the Dead Sea. One priest stood and poured the water he had brought up from Siloam into one of these basins. Another poured the contents of a like pitcher filled with wine into the other. As they did so the vast assemblage broke out into the most exulting exclamations of joy. The trumpets of the Temple sounded. In voice and upon instrument the trained choristers put forth all their skill and power. Led by them, many thousand voices chanted the Great Hallel (the Psalms from the 113th to the 118th), pausing at the verses on which the chief emphasis was placed to wave triumphantly in the air the branches that they all bore, and make the welkin ring with their rejoicing. This was the happiest service in all the yearly ceremonial of Judaism. "He," said the old Jewish proverb,

“who has never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the waters of Siloam—has never seen rejoicing all his life.” All this rejoicing was connected with that picturesque proceeding by which the Lord’s providing water for his people in their desert wanderings was symbolized and commemorated. And few, if any, have doubted that it was with direct allusion to this daily pouring out of the waters of Siloam, which was so striking a feature of the festival, that on the last, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” “Your forefathers thirsted in the wilderness, and I smote the rock for them, so that the waters flowed forth. I made a way for them in the wilderness, and gave rivers in the desert to give drink to my people—my chosen. But of what was that thirst of theirs, and the manner in which I met it, an emblem? Did not Isaiah tell you, when in my name he spake, saying, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of

Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water?" And now I am here to fulfil in person all the promises that I made by the lips of my servant Isaiah, and I gather them up and condense them in the invitation—"If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink."

"If any man thirst!" Ah! the Saviour knew it of these rejoicing Israelites, that glad and grateful as they were for the land that they had entered into out of the wilderness—no dry and thirsty land, but one of springs and of rivers, of the early and the latter rain—there was a thirst that none of its fountains could quench, a hunger that none of its fruitage could satisfy. And he knows it of us, and of all men, that a like deep inward thirst dries up our spirit, a like deep inward hunger is ever gnawing at our heart. Are there no desires, and longings, and aspirations in these souls of ours that nothing earthly can meet and satisfy? Not money, not honor, not power, not pleasure, not anything nor everything this world holds out—they do not, cannot fill our hearts—they do not, cannot quench that thirst that

burns within. Can any one tell us where we may carry this great thirst and get it fully quenched? From the lips of the man Christ Jesus the answer comes. He speaks to the crowds in the Temple of Jerusalem, but his words are not for them alone—they have been given to the broad heavens, to be borne wide over all the earth, and down through all its generations: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” Thirsty we know we are, and thirsty shall remain till we hear these gracious words, and hearing come, and coming drink, and drinking get the want supplied. Yes, we believe—Lord, help our unbelief—that there is safety, peace, rest, refreshment, joy for these weary aching hearts in Thee—the well-spring of our eternal life.

“He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.” Below the spot on which Jesus stood when speaking in the courts of the Temple, there lay vast subterranean vaults, whose singular recesses have only recently been explored. Descending into them, you get a glimpse, by help of dimly burning tapers, of a vast cistern below the site of the ancient temple. Whether this large reservoir be filled wholly from with-

out, or has a spring of living waters supplying it from below, remains to be ascertained. Enough, however, has been discovered to stamp with truth the ancient Jewish stories about the great cistern, "whose compass was as the sea," and about the unfailing waters of the Temple. Nor can we any longer doubt that it was to these subterranean supplies of water that the prophet Joel alluded when he said, "It shall come to pass in that day that a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim;" that the prophet Zechariah alluded to when he said, "It shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them turned toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder;" that still more pointedly the prophet Ezekiel alluded to when he said, "Afterward he brought me again into the door of the house, and behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." And as little can we doubt that Jesus had these very scriptures in his thoughts and that cavity beneath his feet in his eye when he said, "He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, out

of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters."

'He that believeth shall not barely and alone have his own thirst assuaged, but I in him, by my Spirit given, moulding him into my own likeness, shall turn him into a separate well-head, from whose depths rivers of living water shall flow forth to visit, gladden, fructify some lesser or larger portion of the arid waste around.' Let us know and remember then, that Jesus, the divine assuager of the thirst of human hearts, imparts the blessing to each who comes to him, that he may go and impart the blessing to others. He comforts us with a sense of his presence, guidance, protection, sympathy, that we may go and console others with that same comfort wherewith we have been comforted of him. He never gives that we may selfishly hoard the treasure that we get. That treasure, like the bread that was broken for the thousands on the hillside of Galilee, multiplies in the hand that takes it to divide and to distribute.

V.

JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.*

JESUS was in the Treasury. It stood at the north side of one of those large enclosures called the Court of the Women, which lay outside the Temple properly so called, and in which, on all the great annual festivals, crowds were wont daily to assemble. In the centre of this court, at the Feast of Tabernacles, two tall stands were placed, each supporting four large branching candelabra. As at the time of morning sacrifice the procession wound its way up from the fountain of Siloam, and the water was poured out from the golden pitcher to remind the people of the supply of water that had been made for their forefathers during the desert wanderings ; so after the evening sacrifice all the lights in these candelabra were kindled, the flame broad and brilliant enough to illuminate the whole city, to remind

* John viii. 12-59.

the people of the pillar of light by which their marchings through the wilderness were guided. And still freer and heartier than the morning jubilations which attended on the libation of the water, were the evening ones which accompanied the kindling of the lights. It was with allusion to the one ceremony that Jesus said, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." It was with allusion to the other, of which both he and those around him were reminded by the stately chandeliers which stood at the time before their eyes, that he said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." In uttering both these sayings, Jesus placed himself in a singular and elevated relationship to the whole human family. In the one he invited the entire multitude of human thirsters to come to him to have their thirst assuaged. In the other he claimed to be the one central source of light and life to the whole world. Is it surprising that as they looked at him, and heard him speaking in this way, and thought of who and what, according to their reckoning, he was, the Jews should have seen egotism and arrogance in his words? There was in truth the very utmost pitch of

such arrogance and egotism in them, had the speaker been such as they deemed him, a man like themselves. But one of his very objects in speaking so was to convince them and us that he was not such—that he stood towards the human family in quite other relationship from that in which any single member of it could stand to all the rest—that besides his connection with it he had another and higher connection, that with his Father in heaven, which entitled him to speak and act in a way peculiar to himself. By word and deed, again and again repeated, Jesus had sought in vain to convey into the minds of these Jews an idea of how singular that connection was. He tries now once again, and once again he fails. Instead of their asking ‘Who is this that offers to quench all human thirst, and who proclaims himself to be the light of the world?’ saying to themselves in reply, ‘He must be more than human, he must be divine—for who but One could claim such a prerogative and power?’ they listen only to find something to object to, and grasping greedily at what lay upon the very surface of the sayings, they say to him. “Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true” Perhaps they had our Lord’s own

words on the occasion of the former visit to Jerusalem on their memory : “ If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.” He was speaking then of a solitary unsupported testimony, —a testimony imagined to be borne by himself, to himself, and for himself, as one seeking to advance his own interests, promote his own glory. Such a testimony, had he borne it, he had then said would be altogether untrustworthy. His answer now to those who would taunt him at once with egotism and inconsistency is, “ Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true : for I know whence I came, and whither I go.” ‘ Had I not known that I came forth from the Father, am going back to the Father, that I am here only as his representative and revealer,—did the consciousness of full, clear, constant union with him not fill my spirit,—I would not, could not speak as I now do. But I know the Father even as I am known by him ; he works, and I work with him ; whatsoever things he doeth I do likewise. It is out of the depth of the consciousness of my union with him that I speak, and what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him, and however else are you to know what can alone be known by my reveal-

ing it if I do not speak of myself, or do not speak as he only can who stands in the relationship in which I do to the Father.

‘But “ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go.” You never gave yourselves any trouble to find it out. You never opened mind or heart to the evidence that I laid before you. What early alienated you from me was that I came not accredited as you would have desired, submitted no proofs of my heavenly calling to you for your approval, made no obeisance to you on entering on my career, came not up here to seek instruction at your hands, asked not from you any liberty to act as a scribe, a teacher of the law—instead of this, claimed at once this Temple as my Father’s house, condemned the way in which you were suffering its sacred precincts to be defiled, and have ever since, in all that I have said and done, been lifting up a constant, loud, and strenuous protest against you and your ways. You sit now in judgment upon me—you condemn me. You say that I am bearing record of myself, and that my record is not true, but “ye judge after the flesh.” You have allowed human prejudice, human passion, to fashion your judgment. I so judge no man. It was

not to judge that I came into this world. I came not to condemn, but to save it. And yet if I judge, as in one sense I must, and am even now about to do, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me judge, as we do everything, together. Your own very law declares, "that the testimony of two men is true." I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.'

As if they wished this second witness to be produced, they say to him contemptuously, "Where is thy Father?" Jesus answered, "Ye neither know me, nor my Father." "You think that you know me, you pride yourselves in not being deceived in me as the poor ignorant multitude is—my earthly pedigree as believed in by you satisfies you as to my character and claims. You can scarcely, after all that I have said, have failed to perceive whom I meant when I was speaking of my Father. Him, too, you think you know; you pride yourselves on your superior acquaintance with him; you present yourselves to the people as the wisest and best expounders of his will and law. But "ye neither know me nor my Father;" for to know the one is to know the

other—to remain ignorant of the one is to remain ignorant of the other. It is your want of all true knowledge of me that keeps you from knowing God. It is the want of all true knowledge of God that keeps you from knowing me. Had you known me, you should have known him ; had you known him, you should have known me.”

So fared it with our Lord's declaration that he was the Light of the world as it was at first spoken in the temple ; so ended the first brief colloquy with the Jews to which its utterance gave birth. There was one, however, of its first hearers upon whom it made a very different impression from that it made on the rulers of the Jews, who treasured it up in his heart, who saw ever as his Master's life evolved itself before him, more and more evidence of its truth whose spirit was afterwards enlightened to take in a truer, larger idea of the place and function of his Lord in the spiritual kingdom than has ever, perhaps, been given to another of the children of men, who, on this account, was chosen of the Lord to set them forth in his Gospel and in his Epistles, and who has given to us this explanation of the words of his Master : “ In the beginning was the Word, and the

Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life ; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not." John "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (for the life was manifested,) and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "This is the true God and eternal life." Such is the description John has left us of him who spiritually is the sun of this dark world, the central source of all its life and light. The life and light of the soul lie in

the love of its Creator,—in likeness to him, communion with him,—in free, glad service rendered, the joy of his approval felt. Freshly, fully was life and light enjoyed by man in the days of his innocence,—the light of God's gracious presence shone upon his soul and gladdened all his heart. Made in his Maker's image, he walked confidently, rejoicingly, in the light of his countenance, reflecting in his own peaceful, loving, holy, happy spirit as much as such mirror could of the glory of his Creator. He disobeyed and died; the light went out; at one stride came the dark. But the gloom of that darkness, the stillness of that death, were not suffered to prevail. From the beginning life and light have gone forth from Christ; all the spiritual animation that this world anywhere has witnessed, all the spiritual light by which its darkness has been alleviated, spring from him. The great Son of Righteousness, indeed, seemed long of rising. It was a time of moon and stars and morning twilight, till he came. But at last he arose with healing in his beams. And now it is by coming unto him that death is turned into life, and darkness into light. He that hath him hath life, he that

followeth him walketh not in darkness, but has the light of life.

The short colloquy betwixt Christ and the Pharisees, consequent upon his announcement of himself as the light of the world, ended in their lips being for the moment closed. The silence that ensued was speedily broken by our Lord's repeating what he had said before about his going away—going where they could not follow. The speech had formerly excited only wonder, and they had said *among themselves*, "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?" Now their passion against him has so risen that it excites contempt, and they say openly, not indeed to him, but of him, "Will he kill himself? That would indeed be to go where we could not follow. Perhaps that may be what he means." The drawing of such distinction between themselves and him gives to Jesus the opportunity of setting forth the real and radical difference that there was between them. The portraiture of their character and pedigree which, with truthful and unsparing hand, he proceeded to fill up, amid many rude breaks and scornful interruptions on their part, we shall not minutely scrutinize. One or two things only about the manner of our Lord's

treatment of his adversaries in this word-battle with them, let us note.

He does not say explicitly that he is the Christ. His questioners were well aware what kind of person their Messiah was generally expected to be, how different from all that Jesus was. They would provoke him to make a claim which they knew would be generally disallowed. He will not do it. When they say, "Who art thou?" he contents himself by saying, "I am essentially or radically that which I speak, my sayings reveal myself, and tell who and what I am." In this, as in so many other instances of his dealing with those opposed to him at Jerusalem, his sayings were confined to assertions or revelations, not of his Messiahship, but of his unity of nature, will, and purpose with the Father. This was the great stumbling-block that the Jews found ever and anon flung down before them. That in all which Jesus was and said and did he was to be taken as revealing the character and expressing the will of God, was what they never could allow, and the more that the idea of a connexion between him and God approaching to absolute identification was pressed upon them, the more they resented and rejected it. But

why? Jesus himself told them. Their unbelief, he constantly asserted, sprung from a morally impure source; from an unwillingness to come into such living contact with the Father, from their dislike to the purity, the benevolence, the godliness that were in him as in the Father. When driven from the position they first assumed as children of Abraham, they claimed a still higher paternity, and said, "We have one Father, even God." Our Lord's reply was, "If God were your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."

They wore a mask; behind that mask they hid a malicious disposition, and so long as deceitfulness and malignity ruled their spirit and regulated their lives, children of Abraham, children of God, they were not, could not be. They might boast what other parentage they pleased, but their works proclaimed that they were none other than the children of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Very plain language, and very severe—not language for man

to use to man—suitable alone for him who knew what was in man, who came as its light into the world, and discharged one of his offices as such in laying bare the hidden corruption with which he came into contact, for “all things that are reprovèd are manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.”

“But as he spake these words many believed on him,” and for them, amid all his rebukes of his enemies, this was his word of encouragement, that if they continued in his word, if they but followed faithfully the light that shone in him, they should know the truth, know him who was the truth, and in him, and by that truth, they should be made free. These Jews imagined that simply as the children of Abraham they were free. So fondly did they cling to this idea that often as the yoke of the stranger had been on them they were ready proudly to say, “We were never in bondage to any man.” Notwithstanding this they were slaves—slaves to sin and Satan. In one sense they were in God’s house, numbered outwardly as members of its household ; but being actually such slaves, in that house they could not abide forever. But if he who was not a ser-

vant in the house of another, but an heir in his own house—his Father's house—if he made his followers free, then were they free indeed. And into what a glorious liberty should they thus be introduced!—freedom from the Law, its curse and condemnation ; freedom from the yoke of Jewish and all other ceremonialism ; freedom from the fear of guilt and the bondage of corruption ; freedom to serve God willingly and lovingly,—to be all, do all, suffer all which his will requires,—this was the liberty wherewith Christ was ready to make free. This freedom was to be tasted but in imperfect measure by any here on earth, for still onward to the end the old tyrant whose subjects they had been would be making his presence and power felt ; still onward to the end, while the mind was serving the law of God, a law would be in the members warring against the law of the mind. But the hour of a final and complete emancipation was to come at death. Death ! it looked to nature like the stoppage of all life, the breaking of all ties, the quenching of all freedom and all joy. Not such was it to be to him who shared the life that Jesus breathes into the soul. To him it was to be rather light than darkness, rather

life than death, the scattering of every cloud, the breaking of every fetter, the deliverance from every foe, the setting the spirit absolutely and forever free to soar with unchecked, unshadowed wing, up to the fountain-head of all life and blessedness, to bask in the sunshine forever. "Verily, verily, if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death."

But now let us look a moment at the special testimonies to his own person and character which, upon this occasion, and in the course of these rough conflicts with scornful and contemptuous opponents, Jesus bore. Light is its own revealer. The sun can be seen alone in the beams that he himself sends forth. So is it with him who is the light of the world. It is in the light of his own revelation of himself that we can see Jesus as he is. And what, as seen in the beams that he here sheds forth, does he appear? Two features of his character stand prominently displayed: his sinless holiness, his pre-existence and divine dignity. In proof of the stainless purity of his nature and his life, Jesus when here on earth made a threefold appeal. He appealed to earth, to hell, to heaven, and earth, hell, and heaven each gave its answer back. Two of these

appeals you have in the passage that is now before us. Jesus appealed to earth when, looking round upon those men who with the keen eye of jealousy and hatred had been watching him from the beginning to see what flaws they could detect in him, he calmly and confidently said, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin, of any sin, the slightest transgression? And earth gave her answer when these men stood speechless before him.

He appealed to hell—to that devil of whom he spoke so plainly as the father of all liars and all murderers, who would have accused and maligned him had he dared. "The prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in me"—nothing of his own, nothing that he can claim, no falsehood, no malice, no selfishness, no unholiness in me. And hell gave its answer when the devil whom Christ's word of power drove forth from his human habitation was heard to say, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

Again, our Saviour carried the appeal to heaven, and, standing in the presence of the Great Searcher of all hearts, he said, in words that had been blasphemous from any merely human lips, "I do always those things that

please him." And thrice during his mortal career the heavens opened above his head, and the voice of the Father was heard proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What shall we think or say of him who claimed such perfect immunity from sin—the entire absence of anything that could draw down upon it the Divine displeasure, the full presence of all that could draw down upon it the Divine approval. Was he who knew others so well, ignorant of himself, or, conscious of transgression, did he yet deny it? Ignorant beyond other men, a hypocrite worse than those whom he charged with hypocrisy, must Jesus Christ have been, if, in speaking of his sinlessness as he did, his speech was not the free and natural expression of a self-consciousness of perfect purity, truth, and holiness of heart and life. In presence of one realizing such unstained perfection, who never once in thought or word or deed swerved from the right, the true, the good, the holy, how humbled should we be under the consciousness of how different it is with us, and yet with that sense of humiliation should not the elevating, ennobling thought come in, that he in whom

the sublime idea of a sinless perfection stands embodied, was no other than our Lord and Saviour, who came to show us to what a height this weak and sinful humanity of ours could be raised, who became partaker of our nature that we through him might become partakers of the Divine, and of whom we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is.

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.” Christ’s day was no other than that of his manifestation in the flesh. Abraham rejoiced that he should see that day, and lived his earthly life cheered by the animating prospect. And he saw it, as Moses and Elijah did, for he was one of those who, in Christ’s sense of the words, had not tasted of death, of whom it was witnessed that he liveth, to whom, in the realms of departed spirits, the knowledge of the Redeemer’s advent had been conveyed.

Jesus had said that Abraham had seen his day. They twist his words as if he had said that he had seen Abraham. “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” The contemptuous query gives to our Lord the opportunity of lifting the veil that

concealed his glory, and making the last, the greatest revelation of himself: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Not simply "Before Abraham was, I was," not simply a declaration of a being before Abraham, but a taking to himself of the great, the incommunicable name, carrying with it the assertion of self-existence, of supreme divinity. So they understood it, who instantly took up stones to stone him as a blasphemer. And so let us understand it, not taking up stones to stone him, but lifting up hearts and hands together to crown him Lord of all.

VI.

THE CURE OF THE MAN BORN BLIND.*

WITHIN the court of the Temple, in presence of the Pharisees and their satellites, Jesus had said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The saying, resented as egotistical and arrogant, led on to that altercation which ended in their taking up stones to cast at him, and in his hiding himself in some mysterious way and passing out of the Temple, "going through the midst of them." At one of the Temple gates, or by the roadside without, "as Jesus passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth,"—a well-known city beggar, whom Jesus and his disciples may have often passed in their way up to the Temple. Now at the very time when we might have

* John ix.

imagined him more than ordinarily desirous to proceed in haste, in order to put himself beyond the reach of the exasperated men out of whose hands he had just escaped, Jesus stops to look compassionately upon this man. He sees in him a fit subject for a work being done, which in the lower sphere of man's physical nature shall illustrate the truth which he had in vain been proclaiming in the treasury, that he was the light of the world. As He stops, his disciples gather round him and fix their eyes also upon the man whose case has arrested their Master's footsteps, and seems to have absorbed his thoughts. But their thoughts are not as his. They look, to think only of the rarity and severity of the affliction under which the man is laboring—to regard it as a judgment of God, whereby some great sin was punished—the man's own, it would be natural to suppose it should be ; but then, the judgment had come before any sin had been committed by him—he had been blind from his birth. Could it be that the punishment had preceded the offence ; or was this a case in which the sins of the parents had been visited on their child ? “ Master,” they say to Jesus in their perplexity, “ who did sin, this man or

his parents, that he was born blind?" The one thing that they had no doubt about,—and in having no such doubt, were only sharing in the sentiment of all the most devout of their fellow-countrymen,—was that some signal sin had been committed, upon which the signal mark of God's displeasure had been stamped. It was not as to the existence somewhere of some exceeding fault that they were in the least uncertain. Their only doubt was where to lay it. It was the false but deep conviction which lay beneath their question that Jesus desired to expose and correct when he so promptly and decisively replied, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents," neither the one nor the other has sinned so peculiarly that the peculiar visitation of blindness from birth has been visited on the transgression. Not that Jesus meant to disconnect altogether man's suffering from man's sins. Had he meant to do so, he would not have said to the paralytic whom he cured at the pool of Bethesda, "Go thy way, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee;" but that he wanted, by vigorous stroke, to lay the axe at the root of a prevalent superstitious feeling which led to erroneous and presumptuous readings of God's

providences, connecting particular sufferings with particular sins, and arguing from the relative severity of the one to the relative magnitude of the other.

Nor was this the only instance in which our Saviour dealt in the same manner with the same popular error. But a few weeks from the time in which he spake in this way to his disciples, Jesus was in Peræa. There had been a riot in Jerusalem—some petty premature outburst of that insurrectionary spirit which was rife throughout Judea. Pilate had let loose his soldiers on the mob. Some Galileans who had taken part in the riot, or were supposed to have done so—for the Galileans were always in the front rank of any movement of the kind—were slain—slain even while engaged in the act of sacrificing, their blood mingled with their sacrifices: an incident so fitted to strike the public eye, to arouse the public indignation, that the news of it traveled rapidly through the country. It reached the place where Christ was teaching. Some of his hearers, struck perhaps by something that he had said about the signs of the times and the judgments that were impending, took occasion publicly to tell him of it. Perhaps they hoped

that the recital would draw out from him some burning expressions of indignation, pointed against the foreign yoke under which the country was groaning; the deed done by the Roman governor had been so gross an outrage upon their national religion, upon the sacredness of the holy Temple. If the tellers of the tale cherished any such expectation they were disappointed. As upon all like occasions, whenever any purely political question was brought before him, Christ evaded it. He never once touched or alluded to that aspect of the story. But there was another side of it upon which he perceived that the thoughts of not a few of his hearers were fastened. It was a terrible fate that these slaughtered Galileans had met—not only death by the Roman sword—but death within the courts of the Temple—death upon the very steps of the altar. There could be but one opinion as to the deed of their murderers—those rough Gentile soldiers of Pilate. But the murdered, upon whom such a dreadful doom had fallen, what was to be thought of them? Christ's all-seeing eye perceived that already in the breasts of many of those around him, the leaven of that censorious, uncharitable, superstitious spirit was working, which taught

them to attach all extraordinary calamities to extraordinary crimes. "Suppose ye," said Jesus, "that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you nay." To give his question and his answer a still broader aspect—to take out of them all that was peculiarly Galilean—he quotes another striking and well-known occurrence that had recently happened near Jerusalem—a calamity not inflicted by the hand of man. "Or those eighteen," he adds, "upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." He does not deny that either the slaughtered Galileans or the crushed Jerusalemites were sinners. He does not say that they did not deserve their doom. He does not repudiate or run counter to that strong instinct of the human conscience which in all ages has taught it to trace suffering to sin. What he does repudiate and condemn is the application of that principle to specific instances, by those who know so little, as we do, of the Divine purposes and aims in the separate events of life—making the temporal infliction the measure of the guilt from which it is supposed to spring. It is not a

wrong thing for the man himself whom some sudden or peculiarly severe calamity overtakes, to search and try himself before his Maker, to see whether there has not been some secret sin as yet unrepented and unforsaken, which may have had a part in bringing the calamity upon him. It was not a wrong thing in Joseph's brethren, in the hour of their great distress in Egypt, to remember their former conduct, and to say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, therefore is this distress come upon us." It was not a wrong thing for the king of Besek, when they cruelly mutilated him, cutting off his thumbs and great toes, to say, "Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and great toes cut off gathered their meat under my table. As I have done, so God hath requited me." But it was a wrong thing in the inhabitants of Melita, when they saw the viper fasten on Paul's hand, to think and say, that "no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." It was a wrong thing in the widow of Zarephath, when her son fell sick, to say to Elijah, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance, and to

slay my son?" It was a wrong thing for the friends of Job to deal with their afflicted brother as if his abounding misfortunes were so many proofs of a like abounding iniquity. It is a very wrong thing in any of us to presume to interpret any single dealing of God with others, particularly of a dark or adverse kind, for all such dispensations of his providence have a double character. They may be retributive, or they may be simply disciplinary, corrective, protective, purifying. They may come in anger, or they may be sent in love. And while as to ourselves it may be proper that we should view them as bearing messages of warning, we are not at liberty as to others to attribute to them any other character than that of being the chastenings of a wise and loving Father.

"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifest in him." Those works—works of mercy and almighty power—were given to Christ to do, and here was an opportunity for one of them being done. To pause thus by the way, to occupy himself with the case of this poor blind beggar, might seem a waste of time, the more so that the purpose of his per-

secutors to seize and to stone him had been so recently and so openly displayed. But that very outbreak of their wrath foretold to Jesus his approaching death—the close of his allotted time of earthly labor; and so he says, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” “I said so to those proud and unbelieving men from whose rough violence I have just escaped. I will prove now the truth of what I said by bringing the light physically, mentally, spiritually, to this poor blind beggar.”

All this time not a word is spoken by the blind man himself. Whatever cries for help he may have raised when he heard the footsteps of the approaching company, as they stop before him he becomes silent. He hears the question about his own sins and his parents’ sins put by strange Galilean tongues to one addressed evidently with the greatest respect. He hears the one thus appealed to say, with an authority that he wonders at, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents,”—grateful words to the poor man’s ear. He may have thought, in common with others, that he had

been signally marked as an object of the Divine displeasure. The words that he now hears may have helped to lift a load off his heart; already he may be more grateful to the speaker of these few words than if he had cast the largest money-gift into his bosom. But the speaker goes further: he says that he had been born blind "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." If it were not the work of God's anger in the punishment of his own or his father's sins, what other work could it be? And who can this be who is now before him, who speaks of what he is, and what he does, and what he is about to do, with such solemnity and self-assurance? Who can tell us what new thoughts about himself and the calamity that had befallen him, what new thoughts about God and his purposes in thus dealing with him, what wonderings as to who this stranger can be that takes such an interest in him, what flutterings of hope may have passed through this poor man's spirit while the brief conversation between Christ and his disciples was going on, and during that short and silent interval which followed as Jesus "spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle?" This we know, that when Christ approached

and laid his hand upon him, and anointed his eyes with that strange salve, and said to him, while yet his sightless balls were covered with what would have blinded for the time a man who saw, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," he had become so impressed as quietly to submit to so singular an operation, and, without a word of arguing or remonstrance, to obey the order given, and to go off to the pool to wash. It lay not far off, at the base of the hill on which the Temple stood, up and around which he had so often groped his way. He went and washed, and lo a double miracle!—the one wrought within the eyeball, the other within the mind—each wonderful even among the wonders wrought by Christ. Within the same compass there is no piece of dead or living mechanism that we know of, so curious, so complex, so full of nice adjustments, as the human eye. It was the great Creator's office to make that eye and plant it in its socket, gifting it with all its varied powers of motion, outward and inward, and guarding it against all the injuries to which so delicate an instrument is exposed. It was the Creator's will that some fatal defect, or some fatal confusion of its parts and membranes, should from the

first have existed in the eyeball of this man. And who but the Creator could it be that rectified the defect or removed the confusion, bestowing at once upon the renovated organ the full power of vision? Such instant reconstruction of a defective, or mutilated, or disorganized eye, though not in itself a greater, appears to us a more surprising act of the Divine power than the original creation of the organ. You watch with admiration the operation of the man who, with a large choice of means and materials, makes, and grinds, and polishes, and adjusts the set of lenses of which a telescope is composed. But let some accident happen whereby all these lenses are broken and crushed together in one mass of confusion, what would you think of the man who could out of such materials reconstruct the instrument? It was such a display of the Divine power that was made when the man born blind went and washed and saw.

But however perfect the eye be, it is simply a transmitter of light, the outward organ by which certain impressions are made upon the optic nerves, by them to be conveyed to the brain, giving birth there to the sensations of sight. But these sensations of themselves con-

vey little or no knowledge of the outward world till the observer's mind has learned to interpret them as signs of the position, forms, sizes, and distances of the outlying objects of the visible creation. It is but slowly that an infant learns this language of the eye. It requires the putting forth of innumerable acts of memory, and the acquiring by much practice a facility of rapid interpretation. That the man born blind should be able at once to use his eyes as we all do, it was needed that this faculty should be bestowed on him at once, without any teaching or training, and when we fully understand (as it is somewhat difficult to do) what the powers were which were thus instantly conveyed, the mental will appear not less wonderful than the material part of the miracle of our Lord—that part of it too of which it is utterly impossible to give any explanation but the one that there was in it a direct and immediate putting forth of the Divine power. The skillful hand of the couch-er may open the eye that has been blind from birth, but no human skill or power could confer at once that faculty of using the eye as we now do, acquired by us in the forgotten days of our infancy. It may be left to the fanaticism of unbelief to imagine that it was the clay and

the washing which restored his sight to the man born blind, but no ingenuity of conception can point us to the natural means by which the gift of perfect vision could have been at once conferred.

Yet of the fact we have the most convincing proof. It was so patent and public that there could be no mistake about it. It was subjected to the most searching investigation—to all the processes of a judicial inquiry. When one so well known as this blind beggar, whom so many had noticed on their way up to the Temple, was seen walking among the other worshippers, seeing as well as any of them, the question was on all sides repeated. “Is not this he that sat and begged?” Some said it was; others, distrusting their own sight, could only say he was like him; but he removed their doubts by saying, “I am he.” Then came the question as to how his eyes were opened. He told them. Somehow or other, he had learned the name of his healer. “A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said to me, Go to the pool of Siloan and wash, and I went and washed, and I received my sight.” But Jesus had not yet been seen by him; he knew not where he was. It

was so very singular a thing this that had been done—made more so by its having been done upon a Sabbath-day—that some of those to whom the tale was told would not be satisfied till the man went with them to the Pharisees, sitting in council in a side-chamber of the Temple. They put the same question to him the others had done, as to how he had received his sight, and got the same reply. Even had Jesus cured him by a word, they would have regarded it as a breach of the Sabbath, but when they hear of his making clay and putting it on his eyes, and then sending him to lave it off in the waters of Siloam—all servile work forbidden, as they taught—they seize at once upon this circumstance, and say, “This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day.” The question now was not about the cure, which seemed, in truth, admitted, but about the character of the curer. Such instant and peremptory condemnation of him as a Sabbath breaker roused a spirit of opposition even in their own court. Joseph was there, or Nicodemus, or some one of a like sentiment, who ventured, in opposition to the prevailing feeling, to put the question, “How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?” But they are

overborne. The man himself, at least, who is there before them, will not dare to defend a deed which he sees that the majority of them condemn. They turn to him and say, "What sayest *thou* of him that hath opened thine eyes?" They are mistaken. Without delay or misgiving, he says at once, "He is a prophet." They order him to withdraw. They are somewhat perplexed. They wish to keep in hand the charge of Sabbath-breaking, but how can they do so without admitting the miracle? It would serve all their purposes could they only make it out that there had been some deception or mistake as to the man's having been *born* blind—the peculiar feature of the miracle that had attracted to it such public notice. They summon his parents, who have honesty enough to acknowledge that the man is their son, and that he was born blind, but as to how it is that he now sees, they are too timid to say a word. They know it had been resolved that if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ, he was to be excommunicated—a sentence carrying the gravest consequences, inflicting the severest social penalties. But they have great confidence in the sagacity of their son; he is quick-witted enough, they think, to extricate

himself from the dilemma. "He is of age," they say; "ask him; he shall speak for himself." He is sent for: appears again in their presence, ignorant of what has transpired, of what his parents, in their terror, may have said. And now, as if their former judgment against Jesus had been quite confirmed, and stood unquestionable, they say to him, "Give God the praise"—an ordinary Jewish form of adjuration. "My son," said Joshua to Achan, "give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him, and tell me now what thou hast done." And so now these Pharisees to this poor beggar. "My son, give God the praise. We know, and do you confess, that this man is a sinner." They are again at fault. In blunt, plain speech, that tells sufficiently that he will not believe that Jesus is a sinner simply because they say it, he answers, "Whether he be a sinner, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Balked in their first object to browbeat and overawe him, they will try again whether they can detect any inconsistency or contradiction in his testimony, and so they ask him to tell them over again how the thing had happened. Seeing through all the thin disguise

they are assuming in seeming to be so anxious to get at the truth, he taunts them, saying, "I told you before, and ye did not hear; wherefore would you hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?" No ambiguous confession of discipleship on his part. So at least they took it who replied, "Thou art his disciple; we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." Poor though he be, and altogether at the mercy of the men before whom he stands, the healed man cannot bear to hear his healer spoken of in such contemptuous terms. With a courage that ranks him as the first of the great company of confessors, and with a wisdom that raises him above all those high-born and well-taught Pharisees, he says, "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if a man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." So terse, so pungent, so unanswerable the speech, that passion

now takes the place of argument, and the old and vulgar weapon of authority is grasped and used. Meanly casting his calamity in his teeth, they say, "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out—excommunicated him on the spot.

Jesus hears of the wisdom and the fearlessness that he had displayed in the defence of the character and doings of his healer, and of the heavy doom that had in consequence been visited on him, and throws himself across his path. Meeting him by the way, he says to him, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" Up to this moment he had never seen the man who had anointed his eyes with the clay and bidden him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He might not by look alone have recognized him, but the voice he never could forget. As soon as that voice is heard, he knows who the speaker is. Much he might have liked to tell, and much to ask; but all other questions are lost in the one, that with such emphasis the Saviour puts—"Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" He had heard of men of God, prophets of God, the Christ of God: but the Son of God—one claiming the same kind of paternity in God that every true son claims in

his father—such a one he had never heard of. “Who is he, Lord?” he asks, “that I might believe in him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.” Never but once before that we know of or can remember—never but to the woman of Samaria—was so clear, so direct, so personal a revelation of himself made by Jesus Christ. In both—the woman by the well-side, the blind beggar by the wayside—Jesus found simplicity and candor, quickness of intelligence, openness to evidence, readiness to confess. Both followed the light already given. Both, before any special testimony to his own character was borne by Jesus himself, acknowledged him to be a prophet. Both thus stepped out far in advance of the great mass of those around them—in advance of many who were reckoned as disciples of the Lord. The man’s, however, was the fuller and firmer faith. It had a deeper foundation to rest on. Jesus exhibited to the woman such a miracle of knowledge as drew from her the exclamation, “Sir, I perceive thou art a prophet.” Upon the man he wrought such a miracle of power and love as begat within the deep conviction that he was a true worshipper of God

—a faithful doer of the Divine will—a man of God—a prophet of God ; and to this conviction he had adhered before the frowning rulers, and in face of all that they could do against him. He had risked all and lost much rather than deny such faith as he had in Jesus. And to him the fuller revelation was imparted. Jesus only told the woman of Samaria that it was Messiah—the Christ of God—who stood before her. He told the man that it was the Son of God who stood before him. How far the discovery of his Sonship to God—his true and proper divinity—went beyond that of his Messiahship, we shall have occasion hereafter to unfold. But see how instantaneous the faith that follows the great and unexpected disclosure. “ Who is he, Lord ? ” the Son of God of whom you speak ? “ I that speak unto thee am he. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him ; ” worshipped him as few of his immediate followers yet had done : worshipped him as Thomas and the others did when they had the great miracle of the resurrection and the sight of the risen Saviour to originate and confirm their faith. What shall we say of this quick faith and its accompanying worship—evidences as they were of a fresh

full tide of light poured into this man's mind? Shall we say that here another miracle was wrought—an inward and spiritual one, great and wonderful as that when, by the pool-side of Siloam, he washed those sightless eyeballs, and as he washed, the clear, pure, bubbling water showed itself—the first bright object that met his opening vision—and he lifted up his eyes and looked around, and the hills of Zion and of Olivet, and the fair valley of the Kedron, burst upon his astonished gaze? That perhaps were wrong, for great as the work of God's Holy Spirit is in enlightening and quickening the human soul, it is not a miraculous one, and should not be spoken of as such. But, surely, of the two—the opening of the bodily and the opening of the spiritual vision—the latter was God's greater and higher gift.

VII.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.*

THE blind beggar of Jerusalem was healed. How different the impression and effect of this healing upon the man himself, on the one side, and the Pharisees, his excommunicators, on the other ! He a poor, uneducated, yet simple-minded, simple-hearted man, grasping with so firm a hold, and turning to such good account, the knowledge that he had, and eager to have more ; reaping, as the fruit of Christ's act of mercy met in such a spirit, the unfolding by our Lord himself of his highest character and office : they, the guides and leaders of the people, so well taught and so wise, unable to discredit the miracle, yet seizing upon the circumstance that it was done upon the Sabbath, and turning this into a reproach, their prejudices fed and strengthened, their eyes growing

* John ix. 39-41; x. 1-39.

more blinded, their hearts more hardened against Christ. This contrast appears to have struck the mind of our Lord himself. It was in the Temple, the only place where he could meet his fellow-men while under the ban of the Sanhedrim, that the healed man met Jesus. They may have been alone, or nearly so, when Christ put the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and having got the answer which showed what readiness there was to receive further light, made the great disclosure of his Divinity. Soon, however, a number of the Pharisees approach, attracted by the interview. As he sees, compares, contrasts the two—the man and them—he says, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not" (as this poor blind beggar) "may see, and that they which see" (as the Pharisees) "might be made blind." The Pharisees are not so blind as not to perceive the drift and bearing of the speech. They mockingly inquire, "Are we blind also?" "If ye were blind," is our Lord's reply—utterly blind, had no power or faculty of vision, "ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see." 'You think you see; you pride yourselves on seeing so much better and so much further than others. Un-

conscious of your existing blindness, you will not come to me to have your eyes opened : will not submit to the humbling operation at my hands : therefore your sin remaineth, abides, and accumulates upon you. Here was a poor stricken sheep, whom ye, claiming to be the shepherds of the flock, have cast out from your fold, whom I have sought and found. Let me tell you who and what a true shepherd of God's flock is. He is one that enters by the door into the sheepfold, to whom the porter opens readily the door, whose voice the sheep are quick to recognize, who calleth his own sheep by name, going before them and leading them out. He is a stranger, a thief, a robber, and no true shepherd of the sheep, who will not enter by the door, but climbeth up some other way.' Acute enough to perceive that this was said concerning human shepherds generally, leaders or pastors of the people : intended to distinguish the true among such from the false, and that some allusion to themselves was intended, Christ's hearers were yet at a loss to know what the door could be of which he was speaking, and who the thieves and robbers were. Dropping, therefore, all generality and all ambiguity, Jesus adds, " Verily, verily, I say un-

to you, I am the door of the sheep." 'I have been, I am, I ever shall be, the one and only door of entrance and of exit, both for shepherds and for sheep. All that ever came before me, without acknowledging me, independently of me, setting me aside, yet pretending to be shepherds of the sheep—they are the thieves and the robbers. I am the door ; by me, if any man enter in, whether he claims to be a shepherd, or numbers himself merely as one of the flock — those who are shepherds as to others being still sheep as to me—if any man so enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'

This much being said of the door, the one way of entrance into God's true fold, the image of the door is dropped, and without circumlocution or reserve, Christ announces himself as the Good Shepherd, and proceeds to describe his character and work as such. 'I am the Good Shepherd ; not simply a kind or loving shepherd, as opposed to such as are unkind or harsh in their treatment of the flock, but I am the one, the only one, in whom all the qualities needful to constitute the true and faithful shepherd, meet and culminate in full and harmonious perfection. I am the Good Shepherd, who has

already done, who waits still to do, that for the sheep which none other ever did or could do.' On one or two of the qualities or characteristics which Christ here claims for himself, as wearing and executing the office, let us now fix our thoughts.

1. He sets before us the minute personal interest that he takes in each individual member of his flock. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." The allusion here is to the fact that Eastern shepherds did give a separate name to each separate sheep, who came in time to know it, and, on hearing it, to follow at the shepherd's call. It is thus that, when Isaiah would set forth the relation in which the Great Creator stands to the starry host, he represents him as leading them out at night as a shepherd leadeth out his sheep. "Lift up your eyes, and behold who hath created these things; that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names." It is no mere general knowledge, general care, that the Great Creator possesseth and exercises. There is not a single star in all that starry host unnoticed, unguided, unnamed. The eye that seeth all, sees each as distinctly as if it alone were before it. The hand that guideth all, guides each as

carefully as if it alone had to be directed by it. So is it with Jesus and the great multitude of his redeemed. Singling each out of that vast company, he says, "I have redeemed thee : I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine." "I have graven thy name on the palms of my hands, to be ever there before mine eye. To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he who receiveth it." Individual names are given to mark off individual objects, to separate each, visibly and distinctly, from all others of the same kind. A new island is discovered, its discoverer gives to it its new name. A new instrument is invented, its inventor gives to it its new name. In that island, as distinguished from all other islands, its discoverer takes ever afterwards a special interest. In that instrument, as different from all others, a like special interest is taken by its inventor. Another human spirit is redeemed to God : its Redeemer gives to it its new name, and forever afterwards in that spirit he takes a living, personal, peculiar interest : bending over it continually with infinite tenderness, watching each doubt, each fear, each trial, each temptation, each fall, each rising again, each conflict, each victory, each

defeat, every movement, minute or momentous, by which its progress is advanced or retarded, watching each and all with a solicitude as special and particular as if it were upon it that the exclusive regards of his loving heart were fixed.

It was no vague, indefinite, indiscriminate good will to all mankind that Jesus showed when here on earth. A large part of the narrative of his life and labors is occupied with the details of his intercourse with individuals, intended to set forth the special personal interest in each of them that he took. Philip brings Nathanael to him. Jesus says, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." "I have no husband," the woman of Samaria answers. Jesus says, "Thou hast well said thou hast no husband, for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband ; in that saidst thou truly." A lone, afflicted woman creeps furtively near to him, that she may touch but the hem of his garment ; she is healed, but must not go away imagining that she was unseen, unrecognized. Zaccheus climbs up into the sycamore expecting simply to get a sight of him as he passes by. Christ comes up, stops before the

tree, looks up, and says, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Too numerous to go on quoting thus were the manifestations of personal and particular regard shown by Jesus before his death. And when he rose from the sepulchre, he rose with the same heart in him for special affection. It was the risen Saviour who put the message into the angel's lips, "Go tell the disciples and Peter that he is risen from the dead." And when he ascended up to heaven, he carried the same heart with him to the throne. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" There was not one of those, his little ones, whom Saul was persecuting, that he did not identify with himself. No vague, indefinite, indiscriminate superintendence is that which the great Good Shepherd still exercises over his flock, but a care that particularizes each separate member of it, and descends to the minutest incidents of their history.

We rightly say that one great object of the Incarnation was so to manifest the unseen

Divinity, that our weak thoughts and our languid affections might the more easily comprehend and embrace him as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ the Son. But we fail to realize the full meaning, and to take home to ourselves the full comfort of the Incarnation, if we regard not our Divine Redeemer as seeing each of us wherever we are as distinctly as he saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, Zaccheus upon the sycamore-tree—as knowing all about our past history as minutely as he knew all about that of the woman by the well-side—sympathizing as truly and tenderly with all our spiritual trials and sorrows as he did with those of Peter and the churches whom Saul was persecuting.

2. Christ speaks of the mutual knowledge, love, and sympathy which unites the Shepherd and the sheep, creating a bond between them of the closest and most endearing kind. “I know my sheep, and am known of mine, as my Father knoweth me, and as I know the Father.” The mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep is likened thus to the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son. The ground of the comparison cannot be in the omniscience possessed equally by the Father

and the Son, in virtue of which each fully knows the other, for no such faculty is possessed by the sheep, and yet their knowledge of the Shepherd is said to be the same in kind with his knowledge of them, and both to be the same in kind with the Father's knowledge of the Son, and the Son's knowledge of the Father. What possibly can be meant by this but that there is a bond of acquaintanceship, affection, communion, fellowship between each true believer and his Saviour, such in its origin, such in its strength, such in its sacredness, such in its present blessedness, such in its glorious issues in eternity, that no earthly bond whatever—no, not the closest that binds man to man, human heart to human heart—can offer the fit or adequate symbol of it, to get which we must climb to those mysterious heights, to that mysterious bond, by which the Father and the Son are united in the intimacies of eternal love? This bond consists in oneness of life, unity of spirit, harmony of desire and affection. In the spiritual world, great as the distances may be which divide its members (and vast indeed is that distance at which any of us stand from our Redeemer), like discerneth like even afar off, like draws to like, like links itself to like,

truth meets truth, and love meets love, and holiness clings to holiness. The new-born soul turns instinctively to him in whom it has found its better, its eternal life. Known first of him, it knows him in return ; loved first by him, it loves him in return. He comes to take up his abode in it, and it hastens to take up its abode in him. He dwells in it ; it dwells in him. And broken and imperfect as, on the believer's part, this union and communion is, yet is there in it a nearness, a sacredness, a tenderness that belongs to no other tie by which the human spirit can be bound.

3. The manner in which the Good Shepherd leads his flock. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out ; and when he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him." The language is borrowed from pastoral life in Eastern lands ; and it is remarkable that in almost every point in which a resemblance is traced between the office and work of the Shepherd and that of Christ, the usages of Eastern differ from those of our Western lands. Our shepherds drive their flocks before them ; and, in driving, bring a strong compulsion of some kind to bear upon the herd. This fashion of it puts all

noticing, knowing, naming, calling of particular sheep out of the question ; it is not an attraction from before, it is a propulsion from behind, that sets our flocks of sheep moving upon the way ; it is not the hearing of its name, it is not the call of its master, it is not by the sight of him going on before that any single sheep is induced to move onward in the path. It is quite different in the East : the Eastern shepherd goes before his sheep, he draws them after him—draws them by those ties of dependence, and trust, and affection that long years of living together have established between them. He calls them by their name ; they hear and follow. Hence the language of the Old Testament—“The Lord is my shepherd ; he leadeth me beside the still waters.” “Thou ledest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and of Aaron.” “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock”—a usage this of Eastern shepherd life, truly and beautifully illustrative of the mode by which Jesus guides his people onward to the fold of their eternal rest ; not by fear, not by force, not by compulsion of any kind—no, but by love ; by the attraction of his loving presence, the force of his winning example.

No guide or pastor he, like those Pharisees whom Jesus had in his eye when, in contrast to them, he called himself the Good Shepherd—men binding heavy burdens, and laying them on other men's shoulders, whilst they would not touch them themselves with one of their fingers. In our blessed Lord and Master we have one who himself trod before us every step that he would have us tread, bore every burden he would have us bear, met every temptation he would have us meet, shared every grief he would have us share, did every duty he would have us do. Study it aright, and it will surprise you to discover over what a wide and varied field of human experience the example of our Saviour stretches, how difficult it is to find a position or experience of our common human life to which you may not find something answering in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. The consummating act of his love for the sheep, and the perfect voluntariness with which that act is done. "I am the Good Shepherd—the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." The hireling undertakes to guard the sheep as best he can. It is expected that he should be vigilant, alert, courageous in their defence, run-

ning at times, if need be, some risk even of limb or life. But no owner of a flock ever bound it upon the shepherd whom he hired, as a condition of his office, that if ever it came to be the alternative that the sheep must perish, or the shepherd perish, the latter must give up his life to save the flock. A human life is too precious a thing to be sacrificed in such a way. The owner of the flock would not give his own life for the sheep ; he could not righteously ask his hireling to do it. The intrinsic difference in nature and in worth between the man and the sheep is such as to preclude the idea of a voluntary surrender of life by the one, simply to preserve the other. How much in value above all the lives for which it was given was that of God's own eternal Son, we have no means of computing ; but we can see how far above all sacrifice, that either the owner of the flock acting himself as shepherd, or any under-shepherd whom he hired, ever made or could be expected to make, was that which Jesus made when he laid down his life for the sheep. Yet how freely was this done ! "I lay down my life that I might take it again : no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power

to take it again." Life is that mysterious thing the giving and restoring of which the Creator keeps in his own hands. No skill or power of man ever made a new living thing. No skill or power of man ever rekindled the mystic light of life when once gone out. The power lies with man to lay down or take away his own life, but once laid down, what man is he that can take it up again? Yet Jesus speaks as one who has the recovery of his own life as much at his command as the relinquishing of it, speaks of laying it down in order to take it again. He would have it to be known, that whatever he might permit the men to do who had already resolved to take his life, his death would not be their doing but his own; a death undergone spontaneously on his part, of his own free and unconstrained choice. Most willingly, through sheer love and pity, out of the infinite fullness of his divine compassion, was he to lay down his life for the sheep, that thus they might have life, and have it more abundantly than they otherwise could have—his death their life—his life from the dead drawing their life up along with it and linking their eternity with his own.

So we understand, and may attempt to il-

illustrate this description by himself of himself as the Good Shepherd ; but to the men who first listened to it, especially to those Pharisees whose conduct as shepherds it was meant to expose, how absolutely unintelligible in many of its parts must it have appeared. What an assumption in making himself the one and only door, in raising himself so high above all other shepherds, representing himself as possessed of attributes that none of them possessed, making sacrifices none of them ever made ! If a shepherd gave his life for the sheep, one would think that the sheep would lose instead of gain ; would, in consequence of his removal, be all the more at the mercy of the destroyer. But here is a shepherd, whose death is held out as not only protecting the sheep from death, but imparting to them a new life ; who dies, while yet by his dying they lose nothing—do not even lose him as their shepherd—for he no sooner dies than he lives again to resume his shepherd's office. More than obscure—ambitious, and utterly self-contradictory must this account of himself have appeared to the listening Pharisees, their recoil not lessened by Christ's dropping incidentally the hint that there were other sheep not of the Jewish fold,

whom he meant to bring in, so that there should be one fold, over which he should be the one shepherd. "There was a division, therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings." To many they appeared so presumptuous and inexplicable, that they said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" There were others who, unable to give any explanation of the sayings, yet clung to the evidence of his miracles, particularly of the one they had just witnessed. "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

Leaving them to settle these differences among themselves, Jesus withdrew; and for two months—from the time of the Feast of Tabernacles to that of the Feast of the dedication—the curtain drops over Jerusalem, and we see and hear no more of anything said or done by Jesus there. Where and how were those two months spent? Many think that our Lord must have remained in or near the capital during this interval. It appears to us much more likely that he had returned to Galilee. We are expressly told that he would not walk in "Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him." After the formal attempt of the rulers

to arrest him, and after the populace having taken up stones to stone him, during the Feast of Tabernacles, it seems little likely that he would remain so long a time within their reach and power. When next he appears in Solomon's porch, and the Jews gather round him, the tone of the conversation that ensues, in which there is so direct a reference to his declarations about himself, uttered at the close of the preceding festival, is best explained by our conceiving that this was a sudden reappearance of Jesus in the midst of them, when the thoughts both of himself and his hearers naturally reverted to the incidents of their last interview in the Temple. "Then came the Jews round about him, and said, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." There was not a little petulance, and a large mixture of hypocrisy in the demand. These were not honest inquiries seeking only relief from perplexing doubts. Whatever Christ might say about himself, their mind about him was quite made up. They do not come to ask about that late discourse of his in which he had spoken so plainly about his being the one and only true shepherd of the sheep. They do not come to inquire further about that door, by

which he had said that the true fold could alone be entered. They come with the one distinct and abrupt demand, that he should tell them plainly whether he was the Christ ; apparently implying some readiness on their part to believe, but only such a readiness as the men around the cross expressed when they exclaimed, " Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe." They want him to assert that he was the Christ. They want to get the evidence from his own lips on which his condemnation by the Sanhedrim could be grounded, knowing beside that an express claim on his part to the Messiahship would alienate many even among those whose incredulity had been temporarily shaken.

There was singular wisdom in our Lord's reply : " I told you before, and ye believed not." In no instance had he ever openly declared to these Jews of Jerusalem that he was the Christ. Nor was he now about to affirm it in the way that they prescribed. Nevertheless it was quite true that he had often told them who and what he was ; told enough to satisfy them that he must be either their long-expected Messiah or a deceiver of the people. And though he had said nothing, his works had borne no am-

liguous testimony to his character and office. But they had not received, they had rejected all that evidence. They wanted plain speaking, and now they get it—get more of it than they expected or desired—for Jesus not only broadly proclaims their unbelief, but, reverting to that unwelcome discourse which was still ringing in their troubled ears, he tells them of the nature and the source of their unbelief: “Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” Without dwelling, however, upon this painful topic—one about which these Jews then, and we readers of the Gospel now, might be disposed to put many questions, to which no satisfactory answers from any quarter might come to us—Jesus goes on to dwell upon what to him, as it should be to us, was a far more grateful topic—the characteristics and the privileges of his own true and faithful flock: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” That and more he had previously said while speaking of himself as the good shepherd, and noting some of the characteristics of his sheep. But now he will add something more as to the origin and nature, the steadfast and eternal endurance, of that new relationship, into which,

by becoming his, all the true members of his spiritual flock are admitted.

“And I give unto them eternal life.” Spiritual life, life in God, to God, is the new, fresh gift of Christ’s everlasting love. To procure and to impart it was the great object of his mission to our earth. “I am come,” he said, “that they might have life; and that they might have it more abundantly.” His incarnation was the manifestation of this life in all its fullness in his own person. “The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The life not flowing from the light, but the light from the life, even as our Lord himself had said, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

There are gifts of Christ’s purchase and bestowment that he makes over at once, and in a full completed form, to the believer, such as pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the title to the heavenly inheritance. But the chief gift of his love—the life of faith, of love, of meek

endurance, of self-sacrificing service and suffering—comes not to any of us now in such a form. It is but the germ of it that is planted in the heart. Its history here is but that of the seed as it lies in the damp, cold earth, as it rots and moulders beneath the sod, waiting the sunshine and the shower, a large part of it corrupting, decaying, that out of the very bosom of rottenness, out of the very heart of death, the new life may spring. Could but an intelligent consciousness descend with the seed into the earth, and attend the different processes that go on there, we should have an emblem of the too frequent consciousness that accompanies those first stages of the spiritual life, in which, amid doubts and fears, surrounded by the besetting elements of darkness, weakness, corruption, death, the soul struggles onward into the life everlasting.

But weak as it is in itself, in its first beginnings, this spiritual life partakes of the immortality, the immutability, of the source from which it springs. It is this which bestows such preciousness on it. Put into a man's hand the seed of a flower-bearing or fruit-bearing plant, it is not the bare bulb he grasps he thanks you for. It would have but little worth

in his eyes were it to remain forever in the condition in which he gets it. It is the capacity for after growth, the sure promise of living flower and fruit that lies enwrapped within, that gives it all its value. Slowly but surely does the mysterious principle of life that lodges in it operate, till the flower expands before the eye and the ripened fruit drops into the hand. So is it with the seed of the divine life lodged by the Spirit in the soul ; with this difference, that for it there is to be no autumn season of decay and death. It is to grow, and grow forever—ever expanding, ever strengthening, ever maturing ; its perpetuity due to the infinite and unchangeable grace and power of him on whom it wholly hangs. Strictly speaking our natural life is as entirely dependent on God as our spiritual one. But there is this great distinction between the two—the one may run its course, too often does so, without any abiding sense on the part of him who is passing through it of his absolute and continued dependence on the great Lifegiver. The other cannot do so. Its essence lies in the ever consciousness of its origin, its continuance in the preservation of that consciousness.

You may try to solve the phenomena of life

in its lower types and forms, by imagining that a separate independent element or principle is bestowed at first by the Creator, which is left afterwards, apart from any connection with him, to develop its latent inherent qualities. You cannot solve thus the life that is hidden with Christ in God. Apart from him who gave it being, it has no vitality. It begins in a sense of entire indebtedness to him ; it continues only so long as that sense of indebtedness is sustained. It is not within itself that the securities for its continuance are to be found.

“ My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father’s hands.” Are we not entitled to gather from these words the comforting assurance that all who by the secret communications of his grace have had this life transfused into their souls, shall be securely and eternally upheld by the mighty power of Christ, so that they shall never perish?—not so upheld, whatever they afterwards may be or do, not so upheld that the thought of their security may slacken their own diligence or tempt them to transgress, but

so that the very sense of their having such a presence and such a power as that of Jesus ever with them to protect and bless, shall operate as a new spring and impulse to all holy activities, and shall keep from ever becoming or even doing that whereby his friendship would be finally and forever forfeited and lost. Do we feel the first faint beatings of the new life in our heart? Do we fear that these may be so checked and hardened as to be finally and forever stopped? Let us not think of our weakness, but of Christ's strength; of our faith, but of his faithfulness: of the firmness of our hold of him, but of the firmness of his hold of us. The hollow of that hand of our Redeemer is the one safe place for us into which to put our sinful soul. Not into the hand of the Father, as the great and holy Lawgiver, would the spirit in the first exercises of penitence and faith venture to thrust itself, lest out of that hand it should indignantly be flung, and scattered and lost, should be the wealth of its immortality. It is into the hand of the Son, the Saviour, that it puts itself. Yet, soon as ever it does so, the other hand, that of the Father, closes over it, as if the redoubled might of Omnipotence waited and hastened to guard the

treasure. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. . . . No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." The believer's life is hid "with Christ." Far up beyond all reach of danger this of itself would place it. But further still, it is hid "with Christ in God." Does this not, as it were, double the distance, and place the breadth of two infinities between it and the possibility of perishing?

"I and my Father are one." It was on his saying so that they took up stones again to stone him. He might have claimed to be Christ, but there had been nothing blasphemous in his doing so. Many of the people—some even of the rulers—believed, or half suspected, that he was the Messiah; yet it never was imagined that in setting forth such a claim Jesus was guilty of a crime for which he might righteously be stoned to death. The Jews were not expecting the Divine Being to appear as their Messiah. They were looking only for one in human nature, of ordinary human parentage, to come to be their king. It is not till he speaks of his hand being of equal power with the Father's to protect—till he grounds that equality of power upon unity of nature—till he says that he and the Father are one—that they take up stones to

stone him. And their words explain their actions. While yet the stones are in their hands, Jesus says to them, "Many good works have I showed you of my Father, for which of these works do ye stone me?" Ready for the moment to concede anything as to the character of his works, they answer, "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man makest thyself God." They understood him as asserting his divinity. Had they misunderstood his words, how easy it had been for Christ to correct their error—to tell them that he was no blasphemer as they thought him ; that in calling himself the Son of God he did not mean to claim equality with the Father. He did not do so. He quotes, indeed, in the first instance, a sentence from their own Scriptures, in which their Judges were called gods ; but he proceeds immediately thereafter to separate himself from, and to exalt himself above, those to whom, because of their office, and because of the word of God coming to them, the epithet was once or twice applied, and reasons from the less to the greater. He says, "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world,

Thou blasphemest ; because I said, I am the Son of God ?” At first there was some ambiguity in the defence. Although intimating that the appellation might be applied with more propriety to him than to any of their old judges, it might be on the ground only of a higher office or higher mission than theirs that Jesus was reasoning. They listen without interrupting him. But when he adds—“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, yet believe the works : that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him,” they see that he is taking up the same ground as at the first—is claiming to be equal with the Father—is making himself God ; and so once again they seek to take him—to deal with him as a blasphemer ; but he escaped out of their hands. That neither upon this nor upon any other occasion of the same kind did our Lord complain of being condemned mistakenly when regarded as being guilty of blasphemy, nor offer the explanation which at once would have set aside the charge, we regard as the clearest of all proofs that the Jews were not in error in interpreting his sayings as they did.

We take, then, our Lord’s wonderful sayings

at the Feast of Dedication as asserting the essential unity of nature and attributes between himself and the Father, and as thus assuring us of the perfect and everlasting security and well-being of all who put their souls for keeping into his hand.

VIII.

INCIDENTS IN OUR LORD'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.*

WE are inclined to believe that it was during the two months' interval betwixt the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication that Christ's last visit to Galilee was paid—his farewell taken of the home of his youth—the scenes of his chief labors. Those labors had lasted for about two years, and in them an almost ceaseless activity had been displayed. He had made many circuits through all the towns and villages of the district, performed innumerable miracles, and delivered innumerable addresses to larger or smaller audiences. Yet the visible results had not been great. He had attached twelve men to him as his constant and devoted attendants. There were four or five hundred more ready to acknowledge themselves as his disciples. A

* Luke ix. 51-62 ; x. 1-24.

vast excitement and a large measure of public sympathy had at first been awakened. Multitudes were ready to hail him as the great expected Deliverer. But as the months rolled on, and there was nothing in his character, or teaching, or doings answering to their ideas of what this deliverer was to be and do, they got incredulous—their incredulity fanned into strength by a growing party headed by the chief Pharisees, who openly rejected and reviled him. There had not been much in his earlier instructions to which exception could be taken, but when he began at a later period to speak of himself as the bread of life, and to declare that unless men ate his flesh and drank his blood they had no life in them, his favor with the populace declined, and they were even ready to believe all that his enemies insinuated, as to his being a profane man—an enemy to Moses and to their old laws. Not a few were still ready to regard him as a prophet, perhaps the forerunner of the Messiah; but outside the small circle of his immediate attendants there were few if any who recognized him as the Christ of God. Of this decline in favor with the multitude his adversaries greedily availed themselves, and Galilee was fast be-

coming as dangerous a home for him as Judea. Meanwhile his own disciples had been slowly awakening from their first low and earthly notions of him—their eyes slowly opening to the recognition of the great mystery of his character, as being no other than the incarnate Son of God. Till they were lifted up above their old Jewish notions of the Messiah—till they came to perceive how singular was the relationship in which Jesus stood to the Father, how purely spiritual were the ends which he came to accomplish—he did not, could not intelligibly speak to them of his approaching death, resurrection, and ascension. The confession of Peter in the name of all the rest that he was the Christ, the Son of God, marked at once the arrival of the period at which Jesus began so to speak, and the close of his labors in Galilee. On both sides, on the part alike of friends and enemies, things were ripening for the great termination, the time had come “that he should be received up,” and “he steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem.”

Starting from Capernaum and travelling southward by the route on the west side of the Jordan, he sends messengers before his face, who enter a village of Samaritans. We re-

member how gladly he had been welcomed two years before in one town of that district, how ready the inhabitants of Sychar had been to hail him as the Messiah, and we may wonder that now the people of a Samaritan village should so resist his entrance and reject his claims. It may have been that they were men of a different spirit from that of the Sycharites. But it may also have arisen from this—that the Samaritans at first had hoped that if he were indeed the Messiah, he would decide in favor of their temple and its worship, but that now, when they see him going up publicly to the feasts at Jerusalem, and sanctioning by his presence the ordinances of the sanctuary there, their feelings had changed from those of friendliness into those of hostility. However it was, the men of this village—the first Samaritan one that lay in the Lord's path—"would not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem." Some marked expressions of their unfriendliness had been given, some open indignities flung upon his messengers, of which James and John were witnesses. These two disciples had been lately with their Master on the Mount of Transfiguration, and had seen there the homage that the great pro-

phet Elijah had rendered to him. They were now in the very region of Elijah's life and labors. They had crossed the head of the great plain, at one end of which stood Jezreel, and at the other the heights of Carmel. The events of the last few weeks had been filling their minds with vague yet unbounded hopes. Their Master had thrown off much of his reserve, had shown them his glory on the mount, had spoken to them as he had never done before, had told them of the strange things that were to happen at Jerusalem, had made them feel by the very manner of his entrance upon this last journey from Galilee, that the crisis of his history was drawing on. He courts secrecy no longer. He sends messengers before his face. He is about to make a public triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Yet here are Samaritans who openly despise him—will not give him even a night's lodging in their village. The fervid attachment to Jesus that beats in the hearts of James and John kindles into indignation at this treatment. Their indignation turns into vengeful feeling towards the men who were guilty of such conduct. They look around. The heights of Carmel remind them of what Elias had done to

the false prophets, and fancying that they were fired with the same spirit, and had a still weightier wrong to avenge, they turn to Jesus, saying, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" They expect Jesus to enter fully and approvingly into the sentiment by which they are animated ; they know it springs from love to him ; they are so confident that theirs is a pure and holy zeal, that they never doubt that the fire from heaven waits to be its minister ; they want only to get permission to use the bolts of heavenly vengeance that they believe are at their command. How surprised they must have been when Jesus turned and rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of ; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Jesus is not now here for any personal insult to be offered—any personal injury to be inflicted ; but still he stands represented, as he himself has taught us, in the persons of all his little ones, in the body of his Church, the company of the faithful. Among these little ones, within that company, how many have there been, how many are there still, who cherish the

spirit of James and John? who as much need our Lord's rebuke, and who would be as much surprised at that rebuke being given? There is no one thicker cloak beneath which human passions hide themselves, than that of religious zeal—zeal for Christ's truth, Christ's cause, Christ's kingdom. Once let a man believe (a belief for which he may have much good reason, for it is not spurious but real zeal that we are now speaking of)—once let a man believe that a true and ardent attachment to Christ, a true and ardent zeal to promote the honor of his name, the interests of his kingdom, glows within him, and it is perfectly astonishing to what extent the consciousness of this may delude him—shut his eye from seeing, his heart from feeling—that, under the specious guise of such love and zeal, he is harboring and indulging some of the meanest and darkest passions of our nature—wounded pride, irritation at opposition, combativeness, the sheer love of fighting, of having an adversary of some kind to grapple with and overcome, personal hatred, the deep thirst to be avenged. These, and suchlike passions, did they not, in the days gone by, rankle in the breasts of persecutors and controversialists?—of men who claimed to be animated in all they

said and did by a supreme regard to the honor of their Heavenly Master? These, and such-like passions, do they not rankle still in the hearts of many, now that the hand of the persecutor has, to so great an extent, been tied up, and the pen of the controversialist restrained? prompting still the uncharitable judgment, the spiteful remark, the harsh and cruel treatment. Christ's holy character and noble cause may have insults offered, deep injuries done to them; but let us be assured that it is not by getting angry at those who are guilty of such conduct, not by maligning their character, not by the visitation of pains and penalties of any kind upon them, that these insults and injuries are to be avenged; no, but by forbearance and gentleness, and love and pity—by feeling and acting towards all such men as our blessed Lord and Master felt and acted towards the inhabitants of that Samaritan village.

Perhaps it was the gentle but firm manner in which Jesus rebuked the proposal of the two disciples—telling them how ignorant they were of the true state of their own hearts—that led the Evangelist to introduce here the narrative of those cases in which our Lord dealt with

other moods and tempers of the human spirit which produce often the same self-ignorance, and too often seriously interfere with a faithful following of Christ. One man comes—a type of the hasty, the impetuous, the inconsiderate,—and, volunteering discipleship, he proclaims, “Lord, I will follow whithersoever thou goest.” Boastful, self-ignorant, self-confident, he has not stopped to think what following of Jesus means, or whither it will carry him—unprepared for the difficulties and trials of that discipleship which he is in such haste to take on. The quieting reply, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,” sends him back to reflect somewhat more intelligently and deeply on what his offer and promise imply. Another is asked by Christ himself to follow him ; but he says, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father:” a type of the depressed, the melancholic—of those whom the very griefs and sorrows of this life and the sad duties to which these call them stand as a barrier between them and the services, the sacrifices, the comforts and consolations of the faith. Such need to be taught that there is a duty above that of self-indulgence in any human grief ; and so to this man the Lord’s per-

emptory reply is, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." A third man asks, that before obeying the Saviour's call, he might be allowed first to go and bid his friends and relatives farewell : a very natural request—one in which we should imagine there was little that was wrong ; but the Searcher of all hearts sees that there is a hankering here after the old familiar way of living—a reluctance of some kind in some degree to take the new yoke on ; and so the warning is conveyed to him in the words, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God." So varied was the spirit in which men approached Jesus, in whom some readiness to follow him appeared, so varied was the manner in which our Lord dealt with such, suiting himself to each particular case with a nicety of adjustment of which in our ignorance we are but imperfect judges, but enabling us to gather from the whole that it is a deliberate, a cheerful, an entire and unconditional surrender of the heart and life that Jesus asks from all who would be truly and forever his.

Rejected by the Samaritans, Jesus turned to another village and chose another route to Je-

rusalem, in all likelihood the well-known and most frequented one leading through Peræa, on the east side of the Jordan. In prosecuting this journey, he "appointed other seventy also and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come." Our Lord had gathered around him in passing from Capernaum to Samaria almost the entire body of his Galilean discipleship. It could scarcely furnish more men than were sent forth on this important mission. Every available disciple of suitable age and character was enlisted in the service. It can scarcely be imagined that they were employed for no other purpose than to provide suitable accommodation beforehand for their Master. Theirs was a higher and far more important errand.

For the wisest reasons Jesus had hitherto avoided any public proclamation of his Messiahship. He had left it to his words and deeds to tell the people who and what he was. He had, not long before this time, charged his apostles "that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ."* But the time had come for his throwing aside this reserve—for seeking

* Matt. xvi. 20.

rather than shunning publicity—for letting all men know, not only that the kingdom had come, but that he, the head of that kingdom, the Christ, the Son of David, the king of Israel, was in the midst of them. Before his departure from among them, the Israelitish nation was to have this proclaimed through all its borders. This was to be the peculiar distinction of his last journeyings towards the Holy City—that all along upon their course his Messianic character should be publicly proclaimed, that so a last opportunity for receiving or rejecting him might be afforded. And how could this have been better effected than by the mission of the seventy? By the advance of so many men two by two before him, the greatest publicity must have been given to all his movements. In every place and city the voice of his fore-runners would summon forth the people to be waiting his approach. The deputies themselves could scarcely fail to feel how urgent and important the duty was which was committed to their hands. Summoning them around him before he sent them forth, Jesus addressed to them instructions almost identical with those addressed to the twelve at the time of their inauguration as his apostles. The ad-

dress to the twelve, as reported by St. Matthew (chap. x), was longer, bore more of the character of an induction to a permanent office, carried in it allusions to duties to be done, persecutions to be endured, promises to be fulfilled, in times that were to follow the removal of the Lord ; but so far as that first short mission of the twelve and this mission of the seventy were concerned, the instructions were almost literally the same. Both were to go forth in the same character, vested with the same powers, to discharge the same office in the same way ; to the rejecters and despisers of both the same guilt was attached, and upon them the same woes were denounced. We notice, indeed, these slight differences ; that the prohibition laid upon the twelve not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any city of the Samaritans, is now withdrawn, and that the gift of miraculous power is seemingly more limited as committed to the seventy, being restricted nominally to the healing of the sick. But these scarcely affect the question when comparison is made between the commissions given to the twelve and to the seventy, as employed respectively on the two temporary missions on which Jesus sent them forth. The

result of that comparison is, that no real distinction of any importance can be drawn between the two. Does this not serve, when duly weighed, to stamp, with far greater significance than is ordinarily attached to it, the mission of the seventy—raising it to the same platform with that of the apostles? It is quite true that the apostles were to be apostles for life, and the seventy were to have no permanent standing or office of any kind in the Church. But it is equally true that in their distinctively apostolic character and office the twelve were to have—indeed, could have—no successors. If, then, the commission and the directions given to them are to be taken as guides to those who were afterwards to hold office in the Church, the commission and directions given to the seventy may equally be regarded as given for the guidance of the membership of the Church at large; this, the great, the abiding lesson that their employment by Jesus carries with it—that it is not to ministers or ordained officers of the Church alone that the duty pertains of spreading abroad amongst those around them the knowledge of Christ. To the whole Church of the living God, to each individual member thereof, the great commis-

sion comes, "Go thou and make the Saviour known." As the Father sent him, Jesus sends all who own and love him on the same errand of mercy. Originally the Church of Christ was one large company of missionaries of the cross, each member feeling that to him a portion—differing it may be largely both in kind and sphere from that assigned to others, but still a portion—of the great task of evangelizing the world was committed; and it shall be just in proportion as the community of the faithful, through all its parts, in all its members comes to recognize this to be its function, and attempts to execute it, that the expansive power that once belonged to it will return to it again, and not so much by organized societies or the work of paid deputies, as by the living power of individual pity, sympathy, and love, spirit after spirit will be drawn into the fold of our Redeemer, and his kingdom be enlarged upon the earth.

Where the seventy went,—into what places and cities they entered, how they were received, what spiritual good was effected by them,—all this is hidden from our view. The sole brief record of the result of their labors is what is told us about their return. They came back

rejoicing. One thing especially had struck them, and of this only they make mention—that, though they had not been told of it beforehand, the very devils had been subject unto them through their Master's name. They were pleased, perhaps somewhat proud, that what nine of the Lord's own apostles had failed in doing they had done. Jesus tells them that his eye had been on them in their progress—that he had seen what they could not see—how the powers of the invisible world had been moved, and Satan had fallen as lightning from heaven. He tells them that it was no temporary power this with which they had been invested—that instead of being diminished, it would afterwards be enlarged till it covered and brought beneath its sway all the power of the enemy. But there was a warning he had to give them. He saw that their minds and hearts were too much occupied by the mere exercise of power—by the most striking and tangible results of the exercise of that power. Knowing how faithless an index what is done by any agent is of what that agent himself is, of his real worth and value in the sight of God, he checks so far their joy by saying, “Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not,

that the spirits are subject to you ; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." There is a book of remembrance in the heavens, the Lamb's book of life, in which the names of all his true and faithful followers are written. It may be a great thing to have one's name inscribed in large, enduring letters in the roll of those who have done great things for Christ and for Christ's cause upon this earth ; but that earthly register does not correspond with the one that is kept above. There are names to be found in the one that would not be met with in the other. There are names which shine bright in the one that appear but faintly luminous in the other. There are names that have never been entered in the one that beam forth with a heavenly brilliance in the other. The time comes when over the one the waters of oblivion shall pass, and its records be all wiped away. The time shall never come when the names that shall at last be found written in the other shall be blotted out.

The joy of the disciples had an impure earthly element in it which needed correction. No such element was in the joy which the intelligence that the seventy brought with them

kindled in the Saviour's breast. He was the man of sorrows ; a load of inward unearthly grief lay heavy upon his heart. But out of that very grief—the grief that he endured for the sinful world he came to save—there broke a joy—the purest, the sublimest, the most blissful—that felt by him when he saw that the great ends of his mission were being accomplished, and that the things belonging to their eternal peace were being revealed to the souls of men. “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Once before Jesus had offered up the same thanksgiving, in the same words, to the Father. We sought then to enter a little into its meaning.* Now from the very repetition of it let us learn how fixed the order is, and how grateful we should be that it is so—that it is to the simple, the humble, the teachable, the childlike in heart and spirit, that the blessed revelation cometh.

* See “Ministry in Galilee,” p. 118 *seq.*

Blessed we have called it, taking the epithet from Christ's own lips ; for after he had offered up that thanksgiving to his Father, he turned to his disciples and said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see ; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them,

One closing remark upon the position in the spiritual kingdom here tacitly assumed or openly claimed by Christ. He prefaced his instructions to the seventy by saying, "The harvest truly is great, and the laborers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into his harvest." Who was the Lord of the harvest, to whom these prayers of his disciples were to be addressed ? Does he not tell them when he himself immediately thereafter proceeds to send forth some laborers, instructing them how the work in the great harvest field was to be carried on ? Parting from Galilee he casts a lingering glance behind upon its towns and villages—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Who shall explain to us wherein the exceeding privi-

leges of these cities consisted, and wherein their exceeding guilt? Who shall vindicate the sentence that Jesus passed, the woes that he denounced upon them, if he was not the Son of God, into whose hands the judgment of the earth hath been committed? "I beheld," said Jesus, "Satan like lightning fall from heaven." Was the vision a true one? If so, what kind of eye was it that saw it? "All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." With what approach to truth or to propriety could language like this be used by any human, any created being? So is it continually here and there along the track of his earthly sojourn, the hidden glory bursts through the veil that covers it, and in the full majesty of the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-judging, all-directing One—Jesus of Nazareth presents himself to the eye of faith.

IX.

OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN PERÆA.*

THE Feast of Tabernacles, at which St. John tells us that Jesus was present, was held in the end of October. The succeeding Passover, at which our Lord was crucified, occurred in the beginning of April. Between the two there intervened five months. Had we depended alone upon the information given us by the first two Evangelists, we should have known nothing of what happened in this interval beyond the fact that, when his ministry in Galilee was over, Christ went up to Jerusalem to die there. They tell us of two or three incidents which occurred at the close of this last journey, but leave us altogether in the dark as to any preceding visit to Jerusalem or journeyings and labors in any other districts of the land. True to his particular object of giving us the details

* Luke ix. 51 to Luke xviii. 16.

of Christ's ministry in Judea, St. John enables us so far to fill up this blank as to insert :—(1.) The appearance at the Feast of Tabernacles ; (2.) The appearance at the Feast of Dedication, held in the latter end of December ; (3.) A retirement immediately after the feast to Peræa, the region beyond the Jordan ; (4.) A summons back to Bethany upon the occasion of the death of Lazarus ; (5.) A retreat to “ a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim ;” and (6.) A coming up to Bethany and Jerusalem six days before the Passover. These cover, however, but a small portion of the five months. At the first of the two feasts Jesus was not more than four or five—at the second, not more than eight—days in Jerusalem. His stay at Bethany, when he came to raise Lazarus from the dead, was cut short by the conspiracy to put him to death. Not more than a fortnight out of the five months is thus accounted for as having been passed in Jerusalem and its neighborhood. Where then was spent the remaining portion of the time ? The Gospel of St. Luke—and it alone—enables us to answer these questions. There is a large section of this Gospel—from the close of the 9th to near the middle of the 18th chapter—which is occu-

pie'd with this period, and which stands by itself, having nothing parallel to it in any other of the Evangelists. This section commences with the words, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face : and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him."* St. Matthew describes what is obviously the same event—our Lord's farewell to Galilee—in these words : "and it came to pass, that, when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan."† And similarly St. Mark, of the same movement, says, "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan."‡ In the same chapters, and but a few verses after those in which these announcements are made, both St. Matthew and St. Mark relate the incident of little children having been brought to Jesus. But in the Gospel of St. Luke, the record of this incident, instead of following so closely upon the notice of the departure from Galilee, does not come in till the close of the

* Luke ix. 51, 52.

† Matt. xix. 1.

‡ Mark x. 1.

entire section already alluded to—so many as eight chapters intervening. From that point the three narratives become again coincident, and run on together. We have thus so much, then, as a third part of the entire narrative of St. Luke, and that continuous—to which, so far as the sequence of the story goes, there is nothing that corresponds in any of the other Gospels.

In this part of St. Luke's Gospel there are so few notices of time and place, that had we it alone before us, our natural conclusion would be that it described continuously the different stages of one long journey from Galilee up through Peræa to Jerusalem. Taking it, however, in connexion with the information supplied to us by St. John, we become convinced that it includes all the journeyings to and from which took place between the time when Jesus finally left Galilee to the time when he was approaching Jericho, on going up to his last Passover. But how are we to distribute the narrative so as to make its different parts fit in with the different visits to Jerusalem and its neighborhood, related by St. John? Our first idea here would be to start with identifying the final departure from Galilee, described by

St. Luke, with the going up to the Feast of Tabernacles, as related by St. John. Looking, however, somewhat more closely at the two narratives, we are persuaded that they do not refer to the same journey. In the one, public messengers were sent before Christ's face to proclaim and prepare for his approach ; in the other, he went up, "not openly, but, as it were, in secret." The one was slow, prolonged by a large circuit through many towns and villages ; the other was rapid—Jesus waited behind till all his brethren and friends had departed, and then suddenly appeared at Jerusalem in the midst of the feast. Did Jesus then return to Galilee immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles, and was it in the course of the two months that elapsed between the two festivals that the first part of the journey described by St. Luke was undertaken ; or was it not till after the Feast of Dedication that the last visit to Galilee and the final departure from it took place ? The absolute silence of St. John as to any such return to Galilee, and the unbroken continuity of his account of what happened at the two Feasts, seem to militate against the former of these suppositions. We remember, however, that such silence is not peculiar to

this case—that there is a similar instance of a visit paid to Galilee between the time of the occurrences, reported respectively in the 5th and 6th chapters of St. John's Gospel, of which not the slightest trace is to be discovered there. We remember that if Jesus did remain in Judea between the Feasts, it must have been in concealment, for we are told of this very period, that he would not walk in Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him.* We remember that St. John speaks of his going to Peræa after the Feast of Dedication as if it were one following upon another that had recently preceded it, "He went away again beyond Jordan."† We reflect besides that if it were not till the beginning of January that the journey from Galilee commenced, there would be but little room for all the occurrences detailed in these eight chapters of St. Luke's Gospel: and we accept it as being much the more likely thing that Jesus did retire from Judea to Galilee instantly after the close of the Feast of Tabernacles, and it was then that the series of incidents commenced, the sole record of which is preserved to us by the third Evan-

* John vii. 1.

† John x. 40.

gelist. This, of course, implies that we break down the portion of his narrative devoted to the journeys to Jerusalem into portions corresponding with the interval between the two festivals, and those between the latter of these and the visit to Bethany. This might plausibly enough be done by fixing upon what appears to be something like one break in the narrative, occurring at chap. xiii. 22, and something like another at chap. xvii. 11. Without resting much upon this, let us (distribute its parts as we may) take the whole account contained in these eight chapters of St. Luke, as descriptive of a period of our Lord's life and ministry, which otherwise would have been an utter blank, as telling us what happened away both from Galilee and Judea during the five months that immediately preceded the crucifixion.

Evidently the chief scene or theatre of our Lord's labors throughout the period was in the region east of the Jordan. Departing from Capernaum—turned aside by the inhabitants of the Samaritan village—he passed along the borders of Galilee and Samaria, crossed the Jordan at the ford of Bethshean, entering the southern part of the populous Decapolis, pass-

ing by Jabesh-Gilead, penetrating inward perhaps as far as Jerash, whose wonderful ruins attest its wealth and splendor ; then, turning southward towards Jerusalem, crossing the Jabbok, pausing at Mahanaim, where Jacob had his long night-struggle ; climbing or skirting those heights and forests of Gilead to which, when driven from Jerusalem by an ungrateful son, David retreated, and which now was furnishing a like refuge to the Son and Lord of David in a similar but still sadder extremity. Much of this country must have been new to Jesus. He may once or twice have taken the ordinary route along the eastern bank of the Jordan, but it is not at all likely that he had ever before gone so deep into or passed so leisurely through this district. Certainly he had never visited it in the same style or manner. He came among this new population with all the prestige of his great Galilean name. He came sending messengers before his face—in all likelihood the seventy expending their brief but ardent activities upon this virgin soil. He came as he had come at first to the Galileans, at the opening of his ministry, among whom many of the notices of what occurred here strikingly remind us, for we are distinctly told

when he came into the "coasts beyond Jordan he went through the cities and villages," and "great multitudes followed him, and he healed them," and "the people resorted to him, and gathered thick together; and as he was wont, he taught them." "And when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say to his disciples."* Here we have all the excitements, and the gatherings, and the manifold healings which attended the earlier part of the ministry in Galilee. The two communities were similarly situated, each remote from metropolitan influence, more open to new ideas and influences than the residents in Jerusalem. The instrumentality brought to bear upon them in the presence of Jesus and his disciples, in the proclamation of the advent of the kingdom, in the working of all manner of cures upon the diseased among them, was the same. Are we surprised at it, that so many of the very scenes enacted at first in Galilee should be enacted over again in Peræa, and that, exactly similar occasions having arisen, the same discourses

* Luke xiii. 22; Matt. xix. 2; Mark x. 1; Luke xi. 29, 42; xii. 1.

should be repeated? that once more we should hear the same accusation brought against Jesus when he cast out devils that he did so by Beelzebub, and that against this accusation we should hear from his lips the same defence?* that once more, as frequently before, there should be a seeking of some sign from heaven, and a telling again the evil generation that so sought after it that no sign but that of Jonas the prophet should be given? that once more, when asked by the disciples to teach them to pray the Lord should have repeated the prayer he had recited in the Sermon on the Mount? that upon another and equally suitable occasion, about half of that sermon should now be re-delivered? that we should have in this period two cases of healing on the Sabbath, exciting the same hostility, that hostility in turn rebuked by the employment of the same arguments and illustrations?

These and other resemblances are not surprising, and yet it is the very discernment of them which has perplexed many so much, that (in direct opposition to the expressed purpose of the Gospel as announced in its opening sen-

* Matt. xii. 24 ; Mark iii. 22 ; Luke xi. 14.

tence) they have been tempted to think that, in violation of all chronological order, St. Luke has imported into what bears to be an account of what occurred after the departure from Galilee, many of the incidents and discourses of the preceding ministry in Galilee. Instead, however, of our being perplexed at finding these resemblances or coincidences, knowing as we do otherwise, that it was the practice of our Saviour to re-iterate (it is likely very often) the mightiest of his sayings, they are such as we should have expected when once we come to understand precisely the peculiarities of this brief Peræan ministry. But whilst these coincidences as to events and repetitions as to discourses, do occur, there occur along with them, mixed up inseparably with them, many things both in the spirit and actions of Christ appropriate exclusively to this particular epoch of his life. No allusions to the time or manner of his own death, no reference to the departure and his return, no pressing upon his disciples of the great duty of waiting and watching for his second advent, no prophecies of the approaching overturn of the Jewish economy, came from the lips of Jesus during his sojourn in Galilee. It was not till the time of his transfiguration that he began to speak of such

matters privately to his disciples, and even then it was with bated breath. But now all the reasons for reserve are nearly, if not entirely gone. Jesus has set his face to go up to Jerusalem to die. He waits and works only a little longer in this remote region beyond Jordan, till the set time has come. Nothing that he can say or do here can have much effect in hastening or retarding the day of his decease. He may give free expression to those thoughts and sentiments which, now that it is drawing near, must be gathering often around the great event. And he may also safely draw aside, at least partially, the veil which hides the future, concealing at once the awful doom impending over Jerusalem, and his own speedy return to judge the nation that had rejected him. And this is what we now find him doing. Herod, under whose jurisdiction he still was in Peræa, had got alarmed. Fearing the people too much, having burden enough to bear from the beheading of the Baptist, he had no real intention to stretch out his hand to slay Jesus ; but it annoyed him to find this new excitement breaking out in another part of his territories, and he got some willing emissaries among the Pharisees to go to Jesus, and to say, as if from private

information, "Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee. And Jesus said, Go ye and tell that fox"—who thinks so cunningly by working upon my fears to get rid of me before my time—"Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and the day following : for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! which killest thy prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate ; and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." I have quoted especially these words, the most memorable of which were repeated afterwards, as they present a very accurate reflection of the peculiar mood of our Lord's mind, and the peculiar tone and texture of his ministry at this period.

First, There was a shortness, a decisiveness, a strength of utterance in the message sent to Herod. which belongs to all Christ's sayings of

this period, whether addressed to friends or foes. His instructions, counsels, warnings to his own disciples, he expressed in the briefest, most emphatic terms. Was he speaking to them of faith, he said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye would say to this sycamore-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." Was he inculcating humility, he said, "Which of you having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready where-with I may sup, and gird thy self, and serve me till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." Was he warning them against covetousness, he did it in the story of the rich man who, as he was making all his plans about throwing down his barns and building greater ones, had the words addressed to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,

then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Was he inculcating the necessity of self-denial, an entire surrender of the heart and life to him, he did it by turning to the multitude that followed him, and saying, 'If any come to me, and hate not his father and his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'*

There was curtness even in our Lord's dealings with those who, influenced with no hostile feeling, came to him with needless and impertinent inquiries. "Master," said one of the company, "speak to my brother that he may divide the inheritance with me. And he said, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" "There were present some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." It was not enough to tell them

* Luke xiv. 26, 57, 33, compared with Matthew x. 37, 38. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that loveth wife or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth me is no worthy of me."

that they were wrong if they imagined that these men were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things. They must have it also there told to them, "I say unto you, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Marked especially by the same feature was our Lord's treatment of his enemies, the Pharisees. Their hostility to him had now reached its height. "They began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak many things ; laying wait for him and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him," and "as they heard all these things they derided him:"* He gave them indeed good reason to be provoked. One of them invited him to dinner, and he went in and sat down to meat. The custom, whether expressed or not, that he had not first washed before dinner, gave Jesus the fit opportunity, and in terms very different from any he had employed in Galilee, he denounced the whole body to which his host belonged. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter ; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools ! Woe

* Luke xi. 53, 54 ; xvi. 14.

unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." The first notes thus sounded of that terrible denunciation that rung through the Courts of the Temple as our Lord turned to take his last farewell of them, and of his enemies.

Corresponding with this manner of speaking was our Lord's manner of action at this time. The three conspicuous miracles of this period were the two Sabbath cures and the healing of the ten lepers. Like all the others of the same class, the two former were spontaneous on Christ's part, wrought by him of his own free movement, and not upon any application or appeal. In a synagogue one Sabbath-day he saw a woman that for eighteen years had been bowed together, and could in no way lift herself up. And when he saw her, "he said unto the woman, Thou art loosed from thine infirmity, and he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." Invited on another Sabbath-day to sup with one of the chief Pharisees, as he entered he saw before him a man which had the dropsy, brought there perhaps on purpose

to see what he would do. Turning to the assembled guests, Jesus put a single question to them, more direct than any he had put in Galilee. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" They said nothing, and he took the man and healed him, and let him go." Entering into a certain village, he saw before him ten lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." He said to them as soon as he saw them, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." 'You have what you ask; you are cured already. Go, do what the cured are required by your law to do.' A few words are spoken at a distance, and all the men are at once healed. Is there not a quick promptitude displayed in all these cases, as if the actor had no words or time to spare?

But, secondly, our Lord's thoughts were fixed much at this time upon the future—his own future and that of those around him. His chief work of teaching and healing was over. True, he was teaching and healing still, but it was by the way. All was done as by one that was on a journey—who had a great goal before him, upon which his eye was intently fixed. With singular minuteness of perspec-

tive, the dark close of his own earthly existence now rose up before him. "Behold," he said at its close, "we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death."* "I have a baptism to be baptized with," he said at the beginning of the period, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"† "And the third day he shall rise again." But beyond the days, whether of his own death or of his resurrection, that other day of his second coming now for the first time is spoken of. He is pressing upon his disciples the great duty of taking no undue thought for the future—using the same terms and employing the same images as he had in the Sermon on the Mount; but he goes now a step further than he had done then, closing all by saying, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding;

* Luke xviii. 31-33.

† Luke xii. 50.

that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. . . . Be ye therefore ready also : for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* Still in darkness as to the true nature of the kingdom of God, irritated, it may have been, that after the announcement that it had come so little should be said about it, so few tokens of its presence should appear, the Pharisees demanded of him when the kingdom of God should come. He told them that they were looking for it in an altogether wrong direction. "The kingdom of God," he said, "cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, Lo here ! or Lo there ! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you,"—for them, for us, for all men, one of the most important lessons that ever could be taught—that God's true spiritual kingdom is in nothing outward, but lies in the inward state and condition of the soul. Nevertheless, there was to be much outward and visible enough, much connected with that kingdom and his own lordship over it, of which these Pharisees

* Luke xii. 35, 36, 37, 40.

were little dreaming, and which was destined to break upon them and upon their children with all the terror of a terrible surprise. This was in his thoughts when, after having corrected the error of the Pharisees as to the nature of the kingdom, he turned to his disciples and said to them, "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say unto you, See here! or, See there! go not after them, nor follow them; for as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must we suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed,"—our Lord enlarging upon this topic till in what he said upon this occasion you have the first rough sketch of that grand and awful picture presented in his last discourse to the apostles upon the ridge of Mount Olivet, preserved in Matt. xxiv.

That section of our Lord's life and labors,

of which a short sketch has been presented, has been greatly overlooked—thrown, in fact, into the distance and obscurity which hangs over the region in which it was enacted. A careful study will guide to the conviction that in it Christ occupied a position intermediate between the one assumed in Galilee and the one taken up by him at Jerusalem in the days that immediately preceded his crucifixion.

X.

THE PARABLES OF THE PERÆAN MINISTRY.

DURING that ministry in Peræa whose course and character we have traced, our Lord delivered not fewer than ten parables—as many within these five months as in the two preceding years—a third of all that have been recorded as coming from his lips. The simple recital of them will satisfy you how fertile in this respect this period was, whilst a few rapid glances at the occasions which suggested some of them, and at their general drift and meaning, may help to confirm the representation already given of the peculiar features by which that stage in our Lord's life stands marked. We have before us here the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the Barren Fig-tree, the Great Supper, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, the Prodigal Son, the Provident Steward, Dives and Lazarus, the Unjust Judge, the Pharisee, and the Publican.

The first of these was given as an answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" and, as inculcating the lesson of a broad and unsectarian charity, might, with almost equal propriety, have been spoken at any time in the course of our Lord's ministry. It gives, however, an additional point and force to the leading incident of the story, when we think of it as delivered a few days after our Lord himself had received such treatment at the hands of the Samaritans as might have restrained him—had he not been himself the perfect example of the charity he inculcated,—from making a Samaritan the hero of the tale.

The second sprung from an application made to Jesus, the manner of whose treatment merits our particular regard. One of the two brothers, both of whom appear to have been present on the occasion, said to him, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." A request not likely to have been made till Christ's fairness and fearlessness, in recoil from all falsehood and injustice, had been openly manifested and generally recognized—a request, however, grounded upon a total misconception of the nature and objects of his ministry. The dispute that had taken

place between the two brothers was one for the law of the country to settle. For Christ to have interfered in such a case—to have pronounced any judgment on either side, would have been tantamount to an assumption on his part of the office of the civil magistrate. This Jesus promptly and peremptorily refused. “Man,” said he, “who made me a judge over you?” More than once was Christ tempted to enter upon the proper and peculiar province of the judge. More than once were certain difficult legal and political cases and questions submitted to him for decision, but he always, in the most marked and decisive manner, refused to entertain them. With the existing government and institutions of the country—with the ordinary administration of its laws—he never did and never would interfere. You can lay your hand upon no one law—upon no one practice, having reference purely to man’s temporal estate, which had the sanction of the public authorities, that Jesus condemned or refused to comply with. No doubt there was great tyranny being practised, there were unjust laws, iniquitous institutions in operation, but he did not take it upon him to expose, much less to resist them.

For the guidance of men in all the different relations in which they can be placed to one another he announced and expounded the great and broad, eternal and immutable, principles of justice and of mercy. But with the application of these principles to particular cases he did not intermeddle. He carefully and deliberately avoided such intermeddling. It is possible indeed that the demand made upon him in the instance now before us, may not have been for any authoritative decision upon a matter that fell properly to be determined by the legal tribunals. Had the claim been one that could be made good at law, it is not so likely that Jesus would have been appealed to in the matter. The object of the petitioner may simply have been to get Christ to act as an umpire or arbitrator in a dispute which the letter of the law might have regulated in one way, and the principle of equity in another. But neither in that character would Jesus interfere. "Man, who made me a divider over you?" He would not mix himself up with this or any other family dispute about property. Willing as he was to earn for himself the blessedness of the peacemaker, he was not prepared to try and earn it in this

way. It was no part of his office, as head of that great spiritual kingdom which he came to establish upon the earth, to act as arbitrator between such conflicting claims as these two brothers might present. To set up the kingdom of righteousness and peace and love in both their hearts—that was his office. Let that be done ; then, without either lawsuit or arbitration, the brothers could settle the matter between themselves. But so long as that was not done—so long as either one or both of these brothers was acting in the pure spirit of selfishness—there was no proper room or opportunity for Jesus to interfere ; nor would interposition, even if it had ventured on it, have realized any of those ends which his great mission to our earth was intended to accomplish.

The example of non-intervention thus given by Christ, rightly interpreted, has a wide range. It applies to disputes between kings and subjects, masters and servants, employers and employed. These in the form that they ordinarily assume it is not the office of Jesus to determine. That he who rules over men should be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord ; that we should obey them that rule over us, living a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty—this he pro-

claims, but he does not determine what just ruling is, nor what the limits of obedience are, nor how, in any case of conflict, the right adjustment is to be made between the prerogatives of the crown and the liberties of the subject ; and if ever discord should arise between oppressive rulers and exacting subjects who with equal pride, equal selfishness, equal ambition, try the one to keep and the other to grasp as much power as possible, in such a struggle Christianity, if true to her own spirit and to her founder's example, stands aloof, refusing to take either side.

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.” Such is the rule that Christianity lays down ; but what exactly, in any particular case, would be the just and equal thing to do—what would be the proper wage for the master to offer, and the servant to receive—she leaves that to be adjusted between masters and servants, according to the varying circumstances by which the wages of all kinds of labor must be regulated. It has been made a question whether, in our great manufacturing cities, capital gives to labor its fair share of the profits. One can conceive that question raised by the employed as against their em-

ployers, in the spirit of a purely selfish and aggressive discontent ; and that, so raised, it might provoke and lead on to open collision between the two. Here, again, in a struggle, originating thus, and carried on in such a spirit, Christianity refuses to take a part. She would that employers should be more liberal, more humane, more tenderly considerate, not only of the wants, but of the feelings of those by the labor of whose hands it is that their wealth is created. She would that the employed should be less selfish, less envious, less irritable—more contented. It is not by a clashing of opposing interests, but by a rivalry of just and generous sentiments on either side, that she would keep the balance even—the only way of doing so productive of lasting good.

After correcting the error into which the applicant to him had fallen,—as though the settlement of legal questions, or family disputes about the division of estates, lay within his province,—Jesus took advantage of the opportunity to expose and rebuke the principle which probably actuated both brothers, the one to withhold and the other to demand. Turning to the general audience by which he was surrounded, he said, “Take heed and be-

ware of covetousness." The word here rendered "covetousness" is a peculiar and very expressive one ; it means the spirit of greed—that ever restless, ever craving, ever unsatisfied spirit, which, whatever a man has, is ever wanting more, and the more he gets still thirsts for more. A passion which has a strange history ; often of honest enough birth—the child of forethought, but changing its character rapidly with its growth—getting prematurely blind—losing sight of the end in the means—till wealth is loved and sought and grasped and hoarded, not for the advantages it confers, the enjoyment it purchases, but simply for itself—to gratify that lust of possession which has seized upon the soul, and makes it all its own. It was to warn against the entrance and spread and power of this passion that Jesus spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully : and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up

for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Beyond the circumstance already noted, that the request which suggested it was one more appropriate to a late than to an early period of our Lord's ministry, we have nothing in the parable, any more than in that of the Good Samaritan, which specially connects it with the ministry in Peræa. It is different with the two that come next in order—that of the Barren Fig-tree and of the Great Supper.

Some who were present once told Jesus of those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He told them, in reply, of the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, repeating, as he did so, the warning, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We miss the full force of the prophetic knell thus sounded in their ears, in consequence of the word "likewise" being often used by us as equivalent to "also," or "as well." The intimation, as given by Jesus, was

that they would perish in the same manner. The work done by the Roman sword, the deaths caused by a single falling tower, were brought before the mind of Jesus ; and instantly he thinks of the wider sweep of that sword, and the falling of all the towers and battlements of Jerusalem ; and when that terrible calamity (of which we have here the first obscure hints or prophecy that came from the lips of Jesus) descended upon the Jewish people, then to the very letter were his words fulfilled, as thousands fell beneath the stroke of the Roman sabres—slain as the Galileans were, in the midst of their Passover sacrifices—and multitudes were crushed to death beneath the falling ruins of their beloved Jerusalem. None but Christ himself, none of those who listened for the first time to these warning words, could tell to what they pointed. Forty years were to intervene before the impending doom came to be executed upon the devoted city. No sign or token of its approach was visible. Those around him, some of whom were to witness and to share in the calamity, were living in security, not knowing how rapidly the period of forbearance was running out, not knowing that the time then present was

but for them a season of respite. It was to indicate how false that feeling of security was, to give them the true key to the Lord's present dealings with them as a people, that Jesus told them of a fig-tree planted in a vineyard, to which for three successive years the owner of the vineyard had come seeking fruit, and finding none ; turning to the dresser of the vineyard, and saying, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And the dresser of the vineyard said to him, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I dig about it, and dung it : and if it bear fruit, well ; and if not, then after that thou shall cut it down."

And there, at the point of the respite sought and granted, the action of the parable ceases. Did the year of grace go by in vain ? Was all the fresh labor of the dresser fruitless ? Was the tree at last cut down ? All about this the parable leaves untold. It had been the image of the end, as it crossed the Saviour's thoughts, that had suggested the parable ; but the time had not yet come for his going further in the history of the tree than the telling that its last year of trial had arrived, and that if it remained fruitless it was to be cut down. The story of the tree was, in fact, a prophetic alle-

gory, meant to represent the state and prospects of the Jewish people, for whom so much had been done in the years that were past, and so much more in the year then present : the story stopping abruptly at the very stage which was then being described—not without an ominous foreshadowing of the dark doom in reserve for impenitent Israel—the Israel that refused to benefit by all the care and the toil that Jesus had lavished on it. It is, of course, not only easy, but altogether legitimate and beneficial, for the broader purposes of Christian teaching, to detach this parable from its primary connexions and its immediate objects ; but, as it ever should be the first aim in reading any of our Lord's sayings to understand their significance as at first uttered, in this instance we are left in no doubt or uncertainty that it was the generation of the Jews then living, then upon probation, then in the last stage of their trial—that the fig-tree of the parable, in the first instance, was intended to represent. Regarded so, how singularly appropriate to the time of its delivery, in its form and structure, does the parable appear ! It is the first of a series of allegorical prophecies, in which the whole after-history of the people and age to which Jesus may be said to have himself belonged, stands

portrayed. Never before had any hint of the outward or historical issues of his advent, so far as the generation which rejected him was concerned, dropped from the lips of Jesus. Such allusion, we may say with reverence, would have been mistimed had it been made earlier. It was suitable that the great trial upon which his mission to them put that generation should be somewhat advanced, be drawing near its close, before the judicial visitations, consequent upon its treatment of the Messiah, should be declared. And here, in the narrative of St. Luke, the prophetic announcement meets us, as made for the first time after our Lord's labors in Galilee are over, and he is waiting to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified ; and, as the first hint of the kind given, it is, as was fitting, brief and limited in its range, throwing a clear beam of light upon the time then present, leaving the future enveloped with a threatening gloom.

The same things are true of the parable that comes next in order in the pages of St. Luke. It carries the story of the future a little further on ; but it, too, stops abruptly. A great supper is made, to which many had been invited. The servant is sent out to say to them that were bidden, "Come, for all things are now ready." With one consent, but giving

different reasons, they all excuse themselves. The servants are sent out first to the streets and lanes of the city, then to the highways and hedges, to bring others in, that the table may be filled. The narrative closes with the emphatic utterance of the giver of the feast—"For I say unto you, that none of these men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." Here, in the first invited guests, we at once recognize the Jews, or rather that section of them which stood represented by their lawyers and Pharisees, among whom Jesus was at the time sitting. They had had the invitation long in their hands, and professed to have accepted it ; but when the time came, and the call came from the lips of Jesus to enter the kingdom, to partake of the prepared supper, they all, with one consent, had made excuse. And they were to reap this as the fruit of their doing so—that the poor, the lame, the halt, the blind, the wanderers of the highways and hedges, were to be brought in, and they were to be excluded. Of this result the parable gives a clear enough foreshadowing : but it does not actually reveal the issue. It stops with the second mission of the servants and the declaration of a fixed purpose on the part of the giver of the entertainment ; but it does

not describe the supper itself, nor tell how the last errand of the servant prospered, nor how the fixed resolution of the master of the house to exclude was carried out. Over these it leaves the same obscurity hanging, that in the preceding parable was left hanging over the cutting down of the tree. There is a step taken in advance. Beyond the rejection of the Jews, we have the gathering in of the Gentiles in their stead alluded to, but obviously the main purpose of the parable as indicated by the point at which it stops and the last speech of the master of the house, which is left sounding in our ears, is to proclaim that those who had rejected the first invitation that Christ had brought should, in their turn, be themselves rejected of him. Here, then, we have another parable fitting in with the former, and in common with it perfectly harmonizing with that particular epoch at which St. Luke represents it as having been delivered.

The parable of the Great Supper was spoken at table, in the house of a chief Pharisee, in the midst of a company of Pharisees and lawyers. Soon afterwards, Jesus appears to us in the centre of a very different circle. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sin-

ners to hear him." Jesus welcomed them with joy, devoted himself with the readiest zeal to their instruction. The Pharisees who were present were offended at what they had noted or had been told about the familiarity of his intercourse with these publicans and sinners ; his acceptance of their invitations ; his permitting them to use freedom even with his person. "And they murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The Pharisees in Galilee had done the same thing ; and that St. Luke, in the fifteenth chapter, is not referring to the same incident that St. Matthew, in his ninth chapter, has recorded, but is relating what happened over again in Peræa, just as it had occurred before in Galilee, is evident from this, that he himself, in his fifth chapter, records the previous Galilean incident. In answer to the first murmurings that broke out against him for companying with publicans and sinners, Jesus had contented himself with saying, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they which are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Now, however, he makes a longer apology and defence. He will let these murmurers know what it is in the condition of these pub-

licans and sinners which has drawn him to them and fixed on them his regard—why and for what it is that he has attached himself so closely to them,—even to bring them to repentance, win them back to God. He will draw aside for a moment the veil that hides the invisible world, and let it be seen what is thought elsewhere, among the angels of God, of that ready reception of sinners on his part which has evoked such aversion. Christ does this in three parables—that of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Lost Son. Taken together, these three parables compose our Lord's reply to the censure passed upon his conduct by the Pharisees, and they do so by presenting at once the whole history of that recovery from their lost condition, which it was Christ's great object to see realized in those with whom he associated, and the effect of such recovery as contemplated by those who, not themselves feeling their need of it, looked askance upon the whole procedure by which it was realized ; for just as clearly as the history of the loss and the recovery of the one sheep, and the one piece of money, and the one son, were intended to represent that conversion to God which it was the main aim of Christ's con-

verse with the publicans and sinners to effect, just as clearly do the ninety-nine sheep, and the nine pieces of money, and the elder brother stand as representatives of these murmuring Scribes and Pharisees—those just persons, just in their own eyes, who needed no repentance—thought they did not need it, and who, not understanding the nature or the necessity of the work of conversion in others, condemned the Saviour when engaged in this work. There is a difference, indeed, in the three parables, so far as they bear upon their character and conduct. The ninety and nine sheep and the nine pieces of money, being either inanimate or unintelligent, afforded no fit opportunity of a symbolic exhibition of the temper and disposition of the Pharisees. This opportunity was afforded in the third parable, and is there largely taken advantage of. The elder brother—the type or emblem of those against whom Jesus is defending himself—is there brought prominently out upon the stage : a full revelation of his distrustful, spiteful, envious spirit is made. If thirteen verses are given to the story of the younger brother, the prodigal son, no fewer than eight are given to that of the elder brother. The thirteen verses, too, it is to be remembered,

cover the incidents of years ; the eight, those of a single evening.

Naturally and properly, the deeper, livelier, more universal interest that attaches to the story of the younger overshadows that of the elder brother—so deeply, indeed, that we think and speak of the parable as that of the Prodigal Son ; but as originally spoken, and for the purposes originally contemplated, the part played by the elder brother had much more importance assigned to it than we now are disposed to give it. He is out in the field when his younger brother is so gladly welcomed and has the fatted calf killed to celebrate his recovery. Returning in the evening, he hears the sounds of the music and the dancing within the happy dwelling. He calls one of the servants, and hears from him what has happened. And now all the fountains of selfishness and pride, and envy and malignity, pour out their bitter waters. He sulkily refuses to go in. His father comes out and remonstrates with him. But he will listen to no entreaty. He forgets for the moment all his family relationships. He will not call his parent father ; he will not speak to him as to one to whom he had been indebted—rather he will charge him with injustice

and unkindness ; he will not call the once lost, but now found one his brother—" this thy son " is the way that he speaks of him. Notwithstanding all his unfilial, unbrotherly, contemptuous arrogance, how kindly, how patiently is he dealt with ; how mildly is the father's vindication made ; how gently is the rebuke administered ! Did it soften him, subdue him ? did he, too, come to see how unworthy he was to be the son of such a father ? melted into penitence, did he, too, at last throw himself into his father's arms, and in him was another lost one found ? Just as in the parable of the Barren Fig-tree and the Great Supper, the curtain drops as the scene should come upon the stage in which the final fortunes of those of whom we take this elder brother as the type should have been disclosed. And in so closing, this parable goes far to proclaim its birth-time as belonging to the period when Jesus was just beginning to lift the veil which hung over the shrouded future of impenitent and unbelieving Israel.

The next parable, that of the Unjust Steward, was addressed particularly, and we may exclusively, to the disciples. It contains no note of time by which the date of its delivery

might be determined. We are struck, however, with finding that throughout the period now before us, it was as servants waiting and watching for the return of their master, as stewards to whom their absent lord has committed the care of his household during a temporary departure, that the apostles and disciples were generally addressed. And even as the woes impending over doomed Israel were now filling the Saviour's eye, the first pre-intimation of them breaking forth from his lips, even so does the condition of the mother church at Jerusalem, in the dreary years of persecution that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, seem to have lain at this time heavy upon his heart. It was with reference to the sorrows and trials that his servants should in that interval endure, and to the wrongs inflicted on them, that the parable of the Unjust Judge was spoken. Its capital lesson was importunity in prayer, but the prayer that was to go up so often, and was at last to be heard, was prayer from the persecuted whilst suffering beneath the lash. This parable, therefore, like so many of its immediate predecessors, exactly fits the season at which St. Luke reports it as having been spoken.

Were it not for the interest which attaches to the question whether or not the chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, from the 9th to the 18th, present us with a true, and faithful, and orderly narrative of a period in our Lord's life of which no other of the Evangelists tell us anything, I should not have dwelt so long upon this topic. I shall have gained the end I had in view, however, if I have brought distinctly out to view the five months that elapsed after Christ's farewell to Galilee, as spent, for the most part, in the regions beyond the Jordan, as occupied with a ministry bearing evident tokens of a transition period, in which, with his face set steadfastly towards the great decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, our Lord's thoughts were much occupied with the future—the future which concerned himself, his followers, the nation. The events, the miracles, the parables of the period, are all in harmony; and as a whole we may safely say, that they carry in their bosom internal evidence of their having been rightly located by St. Luke, unsuitable as they would have been either for any preceding or any posterior section of our Lord's life. It is but attributing to Christ, our humanity in true and perfect form to imagine that the end-

ing of his labors in Galilee and Judea, and the near prospect of his death, threw him into an attitude of thought and feeling congenial to the circumstances in which he was placed. It was natural that the unseen and the future should at this time absorb the seen and the present. It may be a fancy, but I have thought, while reading again and again the ten parables which belong to this period, that far more frequently and more vividly than ever before in his ministry is the invisible world laid bare. The spirit summoned that night into the immediate presence of its Judge—the angels rejoicing over each repentant returning sinner—the bosom of Abraham upon which Lazarus is represented as reposing—the hell into which the soul of the rich man in dying sinks—where in any of the preceding addresses or parables of our Lord have we the same unfolding of the world that lies beyond the grave? Is it not as one who is himself holding closer fellowship with that world into which he is so soon himself to enter that Jesus speaks? One thing is not a fancy, that more frequently and more urgently than ever before does Jesus press upon his disciples the duty of holding such fellowship. By the story of the friend at mid-

night awakened by the continued and repeated solicitations of his neighbor, by that of the unjust judge moved to redress her wrongs by the simple importunity of the widow, by that of the prayer of the poor publican heard at once and answered, by the appeal to their own generosity as fathers in the treatment of their children, did Jesus at this time seek to draw his disciples to the throne of grace, and keep them there, praying on in the assurance that earnest, renewed, repeated petitions offered in sincerity and faith shall never go up to God in vain. And who is he that encourages us thus to pray—that gives us the assurance that our prayers will be answered? Is he not our own great and gracious Advocate, who takes our imperfect petitions as they spring from our defiled lips, our divided and sinful hearts, and turns them into his own all-powerful, all-prevailing pleadings as he presents them to the Father?

XI.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.*

“**B**EHOLD, a certain lawyer stood up”—
in all likelihood within some synagogue upon a Sabbath-day. In rising to put a question to Jesus, he was guilty of no impertinent intrusion. Jesus had assumed the office of a public teacher, and it was by questions put and answered that this office was ordinarily discharged. This lawyer “stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” His object might have been to perplex and entangle—to involve Christ in a difficulty from which he perceived or hoped that he would be unable to extricate himself. Questions of this kind were often put to Jesus, their very character and construction betraying their intent. But the question of the lawyer is not one of this nature. Something more than a mere idle

* Luke x. 25-29.

curiosity, or a desire to test the extent of Christ's capacity or knowledge, appears to have prompted it. It is not presented in the bare abstract form. It is not, "Master, what should be done that eternal life be inherited?" but, "Master, what should I do to inherit eternal life? It looks as if it came from one feeling a true, deep, and personal interest in the inquiry.

The manner in which our Lord entertained it confirms this impression. Questions of many kinds from many quarters were addressed to Jesus. With one or two memorable exceptions, they were all answered, but in different ways; whenever any insidious and sinister purpose lay concealed beneath apparent homage, the answer was always such as to show that the latent guile lay open as day to his eye. But there is nothing of that description here. In the first instance, indeed, he will make the questioner go as far as he can in answering his own question. He will tempt—*i. e.*, try or prove him in turn. Knowing that he is a scribe well instructed in the law, he will throw him back upon his own knowledge. Before saying anything about eternal life, or the manner of its inheritance, Jesus says, "What is written in the law? how readest

thou?" It is altogether remarkable that in answer to a question so very general as this—one which admitted of such various replies—this man should at once have laid his hand upon two texts, standing far apart from each other—the first occurring early in Deuteronomy, the second far on in Leviticus—texts having no connection with each other in the outer form or letter of the law, to which no peculiar or pre-eminent position is there assigned, which are nowhere brought into juxtaposition, nor are quoted as if, when brought together, they formed a summary or compound of the whole; the two very texts, in fact, which, on an after occasion, in answer to another scribe, our Lord himself cited as the two upon which all the law and the prophets hung. The man who, overlooking the whole mass of ceremonial or ritualistic ordinances as being of altogether inferior consideration, not once to be taken into account when the question was one as to a man's inheriting eternal life, who so readily and so confidently selected these two commandments as containing the sum and substance of the whole, gave good proof how true his reading of the law was. "And Jesus said to him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou

shalt live." 'Take but thine own right reading of the law, fulfill aright those two great precepts, Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, Love thy neighbor as thyself, and thou shalt live ; live in loving and in serving, or if thou reachest not in this way the life thou aimest at, thou wilt at least, by the very failure, be taught to look away from the precepts to the promises, and so be led to the true source and fountain of eternal life in the free grace of the Father through me the Son.'

Trying to escape from the awkward position of one out of whose own lips so simple and satisfactory a reply to his own question had been extracted—desiring to justify himself for still appearing as a questioner, by showing that there was yet something about which there remained a doubt—he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" We may fairly assume that one so well read as this man was as to the true meaning of the law, was equally well read as to the popular belief and practice regarding it. He knew what interpretation was popularly put on the expression, "thy neighbor," which stood embodied in the practice of his countrymen. He knew with what supercilious contempt they looked down upon the whole Gentile world

around them—calling them the “uncircumcised,” the “dogs,” the “polluted,” the “unclean,”—with what a double contempt they regarded the Samaritans living by their side. He knew that it was no part of the popular belief to regard a Samaritan as a neighbor. So far from this, the Jew would have no dealings with him, cursed him publicly in his synagogue, would not receive his testimony in a court of justice, prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection. He knew all this—had himself been brought up to the belief and practice. But he was not satisfied with it. Along with that fine instinct of the understanding which had enabled him to extract the pure and simple essence out of the great body of the Jewish code, there was that finer instinct of the heart which taught him that it was within too narrow bounds that the love to our neighbor had been limited. He saw and felt that these bounds should be widened ; but how far?—upon what principle, and to what extent? Anxious to know this, he says, “And who is my neighbor?”

Christ answers by what we take to be the recital of an incident that had actually occurred. A fictitious story—a parable invented for the occasion—would not so fully have an-

swered the purpose he had in view. A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. We are not told who or what he was; but the conditions and object of the narrative require that he was a Jew. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho—though short, and at at certain seasons of the year much frequented—was yet lonely and perilous to the last degree, especially to a single and undefended traveller. It passes through the heart of the eastern division of the wilderness of Judea, and runs for a considerable space along the abrupt and winding sides of a deep and rocky ravine, offering the greatest facilities for concealment and attack. From the number of robberies and murders committed in it, Jews of old called it “the Bloody Road,” and it retains its character still. We travelled it, guarded by a dozen Arabs, who told, by the way, of an English party that the year before had been attacked and plundered and stripped, and we were kept in constant alarm by the scouts sent out beforehand announcing the distant sight of dangerous-looking Bedouin. All the way from Bethany to the plain of the Jordan is utter solitude—one single ruin, perhaps that of the very inn to which the wounded Jew

was carried, being the only sign of human habitation that meets the eye. Somewhere along this road, the solitary traveller of whom Jesus speaks is attacked. Perhaps he carries his all along with him, and, unwilling to part with it, stands upon his defence, wishing to sell life and property as dearly as he can. Perhaps he carries but little—nothing that the thievish band into whose hands he falls much value. Whether it is that a struggle has taken place, or that exasperation at disappointment whets their wrath, the robbers of the wilderness strip their victim of his raiment, wound him, and leave him there half dead. As he lies in that condition on the roadside, first a priest, and then a Levite approaches. A single glance is sufficient for the priest; the Levite stops, and takes a longer, steadier look. The effect in either case is the same—abhorrence and aversion. As men actuated by some other sentiment beyond that of mere insensibility, they shrink back, putting as great a distance as they can between them and the poor naked wounded man; as if there were pollution in proximity—as if the very air around the man were infected—as if to go near him, much more to touch, to lift, to handle him, were to

be defiled. To what are we to attribute this? To sheer indifference—to stony-hearted inhumanity? That might explain their passing without a feeling of sympathy excited or a hand of help held out, but it will not explain the quick and sensitive recoil—the passing by on the other side. Is it then the bare horror of the sight that drives them back? If there be something to excite horror, surely there is more to move pity. That naked, quivering body, those gaping, bleeding wounds, the pale and speechless lips, the eyes so dull and heavy with pain, yet sending out such imploring looks—where is the human heart, left free to its own spontaneous actings, they could fail to touch?

But these men's hearts—the hearts of the priest and Levite—are not left thus free: not that their hearts are destitute of the common sympathies of our nature—not that their breasts are steeled against every form and kind of human woe—not that, in other circumstances, they would see a wounded, half-dead neighbor lying, and leave him unpitied and unhelped. No! but because their hearts—as tender, it may have been, by nature as those of others—have been trained in the school of

national and religious bigotry, and have been taught there, not the lesson of sheer and downright inhumanity, but of that narrow exclusiveness which would limit all their sympathies and all their aid to those of their own country and their own faith. The priest and the Levite have been up at Jerusalem, discharging, in their turn, their offices in the Temple. They have got quickened afresh there all the prejudices of their calling ; they are returning to Jericho, with all their prejudices strong within their breasts ; they see the sad sight by the way ; they pause a moment to contemplate it. Had it been a brother priest, a brother Levite, a brother Jew that lay in that piteous plight, none readier to help than they ; but he is naked, there is nothing on him or about him to tell who or what he is—he is speechless, and can say nothing for himself. He may be a hated Edomite, he may be a vile Samaritan, for aught that they can tell. The possibility of this is enough. Touch, handle, help such a man ! they might be doing thereby a far greater outrage to their Jewish prejudices than they did to the mere sentiment of indiscriminate pity by passing him by, and so they leave him as they find him, in haste to get past the

dangerous neighborhood, to congratulate themselves on the wonderful escape they had made—for the wounds of the poor wretch were fresh, and bleeding freely—it could have been but shortly before they came up that the catastrophe had occurred ; had they started but an hour or two earlier from Jerusalem his fate might have been theirs. Glad at their own good fortune, they hurry on, finding many an excuse beside the real one for their neglect.

How then are we exactly to characterize their conduct ? It was a triumph of prejudice over humanity—the very kind of error and of crime against which Jesus wished to guard the inquiring lawyer. And it was at once with singular fidelity to nature, and the strictest pertinence to the question with which he was dealing, and to the occasion that called it forth, that it was in the conduct of a priest and of a Levite that this triumph stood displayed—for were they not the fittest types and representatives of that malign and sinister influence which their religion,—misunderstood and misapplied,—had exerted over the common sympathies of humanity ? Had they read aright their own old Hebrew code, it would have taught them quite a different lesson. Its broad and genial

humanity is one of the marked attributes by which, as compared with that of every other religion then existing, theirs was distinguished. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," was the motto which its great Author had inscribed upon its forehead. Its weightier matters were judgment and mercy, and faith and love. It had taken the stranger under its special and benignant protection. Twice over it had proclaimed, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or thy brother's ox fall down by the way and hide thyself from them—thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." And was a man not much better than an ass or an ox? And should not this priest and Levite—had they read aright their own Jewish law—have lifted up again their prostrate bleeding brother? But they had misread that law. They had misconceived and perverted that segregation from all the other communities of the earth which it had taught the Jewish people to cultivate. Instead of seeing in this temporary isolation the means of distributing the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom wide over all the earth, they had regarded it as raising them to a position of proud superiority from which they might say to every other nation, "Stand back, for we are

holier than you." And once perverted thus, the whole strength of their religious faith went to intensify the spirit of nationality, and inflame it into a passion, within whose close and sultry atmosphere the lights even of common human kindness were extinguished. It was in a priest and in a Levite that we should expect to see this spirit carried out to its extreme degree, as it has been always in the priestly caste that the fanatical piety which has trampled under foot the kindest sentiments of humanity has shown itself in its darkest and most repulsive form.

After the priest and Levite have gone by, a certain Samaritan approaches. He too is arrested. He too turns aside to look upon this pitiable spectacle. For aught that he can tell, this naked wounded man may be a Jew. There were many Jews and but few Samaritans travelling ordinarily by this road. The chances were a thousand to one that he was a Jew. And this Samaritan must have shared in the common feelings of his people towards the Jews—hatred repaying hatred. But he thinks not of distinction of race or faith. The sight before him of a human being—a brother man in the extremity of distress—swallows up all such thoughts. As soon as he sees him he has com

passion on him. He alights—strips off a portion of his own raiment—brings out the oil and the wine that he had provided for his own comfort by the way—tenderly binds up the wounds—gently lifts the body up and places it on his own beast—moves with such gentle pace away as shall least exasperate the recent wounds. Intent upon his task, he forgets his own affairs—forgets the danger of lingering so long in such a neighborhood—is not satisfied till he reaches the inn by the roadside. Having done so much, may he not leave him now? No, he cannot part from him till he sees what a night's rest will do. The morning sees his rescued brother better. Now he may depart. Yes, but not till he has done all he can to secure that he be properly waited on till all danger is over. He may be a humane enough man, the keeper of this inn, but days will pass before the sufferer can safely travel, and it may not be safe or wise to count upon the continuance of his kindness. The Samaritan gives the innkeeper enough to keep his guest for six or seven days, and tells him that whatever he spends more will be repaid. Having thus done all that the most thoughtful kindness could suggest to promote and secure recovery, he goes to bid his rescued

brother farewell. Perhaps the good Samaritan leaves him in utter ignorance of who or what he was. Perhaps those pale and trembling lips are still unable to articulate his thanks—but that parting look in which a heart's whole swelling gratitude goes out—it goes with him and kindles a strange joy. He never saw the sun look half so bright—he never saw the plain of Jordan look half so fair—a happier man than he never trod the road to Jericho. True, he had lost a day, but he had saved a brother ; and while many a time in after life the look of that stark and bleeding body as he first saw it lying on the roadside would come to haunt his fancy—ever behind it would there come that look of love and gratitude to chase the spectral form away, and fill his heart with light and joy.

Here too is a triumph, not one, however, of prejudice over humanity, but of humanity over prejudice. For it were idle to think that it was because of any superiority over the priest and the Levite in his abstract ideas of the sphere of neighborhood, and of the claims involved in simple participation of humanity, that this Samaritan acted as he did. No, it was simply because he obeyed the impulses of a kind and loving heart, and that these were strong enough to

lift him above all those prejudices of tribe and caste and faith, to which he, equally with the Jew, was liable.

And was there not good reason for it, that in the records of our Christian faith, in the teachings of its Divine Author, one solemn warning of this kind should be lifted up—one illustrious example of this kind should be exhibited? Our Redeemer came to establish another and closer bond of brotherhood than the earth before had known, to knit all true believers in the pure and holy fellowship of a common faith, a common hope, a common heirship of eternal life through him. But he would have us from the beginning know that this bond, so new, so sacred, so divine, was never meant to thwart or violate that other broader universal tie that binds the whole family of our race together, that makes each man the neighbor of every other man that tenants this earthly globe. Christianity, like Judaism, has been perverted, —perverted so as seriously to interfere with, sometimes almost entirely to quench, the sentiment of an universal philanthropy; but it has been so only when its true genius and spirit have been misapprehended; for of all influences that have ever descended upon our earth

none has ever done so much to break down the walls of separation, that differences of country, language, race, religion, have raised between man and man, and to diffuse the spirit of that brotherly love which overleaps all these temporary and artificial fences and boundary lines—which, subject to no law of limits, is a law itself—which, like the air and light of heaven, diffuses itself everywhere around over the broad field of humanity—tempering all, uniting all, brightening all, smoothing asperities, harmonizing discords, pouring a healing balm into all the rankling sores of life.

“Which now of the three,” said Jesus to the lawyer, “was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?”

Ashamed to say plainly “The Samaritan,” yet unwilling or unable to exhibit any hesitation in his reply, he said, “He that showed mercy on him,” Then said Jesus unto him, “Go, and do thou likewise.” It is not “Listen and applaud,” it is “Go and do.” If there be anything above another that distinguishes the conduct of the good Samaritan, it is its thoroughly practical character. He wasted no needless sympathy, he shed no idle tears. There are wounds that may be dressed,—he

puts forth his own hand immediately to the dressing of them. There is a life that may be saved,—he sets himself to use every method by which it may be saved. He gives more than time, more than money : he gives personal service. And that is the true human charity that shows itself in prompt, efficient, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing help. You can get many soft, susceptible, sentimental spirits to weep over any scene or tale of woe. But it is not those who will weep the readiest over the sorrow will do the most to relieve it. Sympathy has its own selfishness ; there is a luxury in the tears that it loves idly to indulge. Tears will fill the eye—should fill the eye—but the hand of active help will brush them away, that the eye may see more clearly what the hand has to do. Millions have heard or read the tale of the Good Samaritan. Their eyes have glistened and their hearts have been all aglow in approving, applauding sympathy ; but of all these millions, how many are there who imitate the example given, who have given a day from their business to a suffering brother, who have waited by the sick, and with their own hand have ministered to his wants ?

The beauty and force of that special lesson which the story of the Good Samaritan was intended to convey is mightily enhanced as we remember how recently our Lord himself had suffered from the intolerance of the Samaritans; only a few days before, we know not how few, having been refused entrance into one of their villages. He himself then gave an exhibition of the very virtue he designed to inculcate. But why speak of this as any single minor act of universal love to mankind on his part? Was not his life and death one continuous manifestation of that love? Yes, bright as that single act of the Good Samaritan shines in the annals of human kindness, all its brightness fades away in the full blaze of that love of Jesus, which saw not a single traveller, but our whole race, cast forth naked, bleeding, dying, and gave not a day of his time, nor a portion of his raiment, but a whole lifetime of service and of suffering, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life.

XII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.*

AT some time and in some place of which we must be content to remain ignorant, Jesus had gone apart from his disciples to pray. They had noticed his doing so frequently before ; but there was a peculiarity in this case. He had either separated himself from them by so short a distance, or they had come upon him afterwards so silently and unobserved, that they stood and listened to him as he prayed. Perhaps they had never previously overheard our Lord when engaged in private devotion. The impression made on them was so deep, the prayer that they had been listening to was so unlike any that they themselves had ever offered—if that and that only be prayer, they feel they know so little how to do it—that, on the impulse of the moment, one of them, when Jesus had ceased, said to him, “ Lord,

* Luke xi. 1-13.

teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." We do not stand in the same peculiar external circumstances with him who preferred this request, but the same need is ours. There is access still for us into the presence of our Redeemer, nor is there in coming to him one petition that should spring more quickly to our lips, one that can come from them more appropriately, than this—"Lord, teach us to pray." To pray is to realize the presence of the Supreme—to come into the closest possible connexion with the greatest of Beings. To pray is to lay our imperfect tribute of acknowledgment at his feet—to supplicate for that which we know he only can bestow—to bring our sin to him, so that it may be forgiven—our wants to him, so that he may supply them as seems best in his sight. What is our warrant for making such approach? how may it best be made? what should we ask for? and how should we ask for it? None can answer these questions for us as Jesus could. How gladly, then, should we welcome, and how carefully should we study such answers as he has been pleased to give!

On bringing together all that Christ has declared in the way of precept, and illustrated

in the way of example, I think it will appear that as there is no one duty of the religious life of such pre-eminent importance in its direct bearing on our spiritual estate, so there is no one about the manner of whose right discharge fuller instructions have been left by him. Thus, in the instance now before us, in answer to the request presented to him, he at once recited a prayer which stands as the pattern or model of all true prayer. Without entering into a minute examination of the separate clauses of this prayer, let me crave your attention to three of the features by which it is pre-eminently distinguished.

1. Its shortness and simplicity. It is very plain; not a part or petition of it which, as as soon as it is capable of praying, a child cannot easily understand. It is very brief, occupying but a minute or two in the utterance; so that there is not a season or occasion for prayer in which it might not be employed. There is no ambiguity, no circumlocution, no expansion, no repetition here. It is throughout the direct expression of desire; that desire in each case clothing itself in the simplest, compactest form of speech.

In the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus

first repeated this prayer, he offered it in contrast with the tedious amplifications and reiterations of which the Jewish and heathen prayers were then ordinarily composed. The Jews, as the heathen of old, as the Mussulmans still, had their set hours throughout the day for prayer ; and so fond were they of exhibiting the punctuality and precision and devoutness with which the duty was discharged, that they often arranged it so that the set hour should find them in some public place. Such practice, as altogether contrary to the spirit and object of true devotion, as part of that mere dead formalism which it was the great object of his teaching to unmask, Jesus utterly condemned. “ When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites ; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They *have* their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet ; and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner pray ye." It was as an antidote to the kind of prayers then generally employed, as well as a pattern specimen for after use within the Church, that Jesus then proceeded to repeat the prayer which has been called by his name. It was not to lie by or be deposited as a mere standard measure by which other prayers were to be tried. It was to be used—to be repeated. When, many months after its first recital, it was said to Jesus, " Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," he was not satisfied with saying, " Pray generally in such a mode or style as this ;" he prescribed the very words—" When ye pray, *say*," and he repeated the very prayer that he formerly had spoken. Not that he put much or any importance upon the exact words to be employed. In three out of the six petitions of which the prayer is made up, there are variations in the words, not enough to make the slightest difference in the meaning, but sufficient to show that it was not simply by a repetition of the words that the prayer was truly said. With rigorous exactness, this prayer might be said over and over

again till it became a very vain repetition—all the vainer, perhaps, because of the very excellence of the form that was so abused. But over and over again—day by day—it might be repeated without any such abuse. All depends upon how you use it. Enter into its meaning—put your own soul and their own sense into the words—let it be the true and earnest desires of your heart that you thus breathe into the ear of the Eternal—and you need not fear how often you repeat it, or think that because you say the same words over again you sin. Our Lord himself, within the compass of an hour, repeated the same prayer thrice in the garden. Use it, however, as a mere form, with no other idea than that because it has been “authoritatively prescribed” it ought to be employed,—a single such use of it is sin.

2. The order and proportion of the petitions in the Lord's prayer. It naturally divides itself into two equal parts; the one embracing the first three petitions, the other the three remaining ones—these parts palpably distinguished from each other by this, that in the former the petitions all have reference to God. in the latter to man. In the former the

thoughts and desires of the petitioner are all engrossed with the name, the kingdom, the will of the great Being addressed ; in the latter with his own wants, and sins, and trials. It would be carrying the idea of the Lord's prayer as a pattern, or model, to an illegitimate length, were we to say that because about one-half of the prayer is devoted to the first of these objects, and one half to the other, our prayers should be divided equally between them. Yet surely there is something to be learned from the precedence assigned here to the great things which concern the name, and kingdom, and will of our Heavenly Father, as well as from the space which these occupy in this prayer. You have but to reflect a moment on the structure and proportion of parts in any of our ordinary prayers, whether in private or in public, and especially on the place and room given in them to petitions touching the coming of God's kingdom, and the doing of his will on earth as it is done in heaven, to be satisfied as to the contrast which in this respect they present to the model laid down by Christ himself. Our prayers, such as they are, with all their weaknesses and imperfections, will not, we are grateful to remember, be cast out because we yield to a

strong natural bias, and press into the foreground, and keep prominent throughout, those personal necessities of our spiritual nature which primarily urge us to the throne of grace. Our Heavenly Father not only knoweth what things we need before we ask them, he knoweth also what the things are, the need of which presses first and heaviest upon our hearts. Nor will he close his ear to any returning, repentant, hungering, and thirsting spirit, simply because these are pressed first and most urgently upon his regard. Is it not well, nevertheless, that we should be reminded, as the prayer dictated by our Saviour so emphatically does, that selfishness may and does creep into our very prayers, and that the perfect form of all right approach, all right address, to the Divinity, is that in which the place of supremacy which of right belongs to Him is duly and becomingly recognized. More especially should it be so in all prayers that go up from this sinful earth to those pure and holy heavens : for if it be true—as the whole body of the prayer prescribed by Jesus teaches us that it is—that we are living in a world where God's name is not hallowed as it ought to be, is often dishonored and profaned—in a world where God's

kingdom of justice and holiness and love is not universally established, where another and quite opposite kingdom contests with it the empire of human souls—in a world where other wills than that of God are busily at work, not always consenting to or working under his, but resisting and opposing it ;—then surely if the name, the kingdom, the will of our Father which is in heaven were as dear to us as they ought to be, first and above all things besides, we should desire that his name should be hallowed, his kingdom should come, his will should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Let us then as often as we use this prayer receive with meekness the rebuke it casts upon that tendency and habit of our nature which leads us even in our prayers to put our own things before the things of our Heavenly Father ; and let us urge our laggard spirits onward and upward from the sense and sight of our personal necessities, till, filled with adoration, and gratitude, and love, before we even make mention before him of a single individual want, we be ready with a true heart to say, “ Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name ; thy kingdom come ; thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.”

And whilst receiving the lesson clearly to be gathered from the place and space occupied by the first three petitions of our Lord's prayer, let its fourth petition, in its sequence, and in its solitariness, and in its narrowness, proclaim to us the place even among our own things which earthly and bodily, as compared with spiritual provisions, possessions, enjoyments, ought to have. Is it without a meaning that we are taught to pray first, "Thy will be done," and then immediately thereafter, "Give us this day our daily bread?" The bread is to be asked that by it the life may be preserved, and the life is to be preserved that it may be consecrated to the doing of God's will. According to the tenor of the prayer and the connexion of these two petitions, we are not at liberty to ask for the daily bread irrespective of the object to which the life and strength which it prolongs and imparts are to be devoted. It were a vain and hollow thing in any of us to pray that God's will be done, as in heaven, so in earth, if we do not desire and strive that it should be done as by others so also by ourselves. And it is as those who do thus desire, and are thus striving, that we are alone at all likely to proceed to say, "Give us this day our daily bread." A natural and

moderate request, we may be ready to think, which all men will at once be prepared to present to God. Yet not so easy to present in the spirit in which Jesus would have us to offer it. Not so easy to feel our continued and entire dependence on God for those very things that we are most tempted to think we have acquired by our own exertions, and secured to ourselves and our families by our own skill and prudence. Not so easy to pray for a competent portion of the things of this life, only that by the manner of our using and enjoying them the will of our Heavenly Father, his own gracious purpose in placing us where we are placed, and in giving us all that we possess, may be carried out. Not so easy to limit thus our desires and efforts in this direction, and to be satisfied with whatever the portion be that God pleases to bestow. Not so easy to renew this petition, day by day, as conscious that all which comes each day comes direct from the hand of God—comes to those who have no right or title to claim it as their own—who should ask and receive it continually as a gift. Not so easy to narrow the petition to the day, leaving to-morrow in God's hands. The simplest and easiest, though it seems at first, of all the six petitions, perhaps this one

about our daily bread is one that we less frequently than any other present in the true spirit. It stands there in the very centre of the prayer—the only one bearing upon our earthly condition—preceded and followed by others, with whose spirit it must or ought to be impregnated—from which it cannot be detached. Secular in its first aspect, in this connexion how spiritual does it appear !

3. The fullness, condensedness, comprehensiveness, universality of the prayer. Of course it never was intended to confine within the limits of its few sentences the free spirit of prayer. The example of our Lord himself, of the apostles of the Church in all ages, has taught us how full and varied are the utterances of the human heart, when it breathes itself out unrestrainedly unto God in prayer. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—ample the freedom and wide the range that the Holy Spirit takes when he throws the human spirit into the attitude, and sustains it in the exercise of prayer—prompting those yearnings which cannot be uttered, those desires and affections which words multiplied to the uttermost fail adequately to express. In the past history, in the existing condition of

every human soul, there is an infinitude of individual peculiarities. To forbid all references to these, all manifestations of these in prayer—to tie every one down at every season to pray as every one else—to allow no minute confession of particular transgressions, no recital of the circumstances in which they were committed, aggravations by which they were accompanied, no acknowledgment of special mercies, nor glad and grateful recounting how singularly appropriate and satisfying they had been—to cramp down within one dry and narrow mould all the plaints of sorrow, the moanings of penitence, the aspirations of desire, the beatings of gratitude, the breathings of love, the exultations of joy and hope, which fill the human heart, and which, in moments of filial trust, it would pour out into the ear of the Eternal—this were indeed to lay the axe at the root of all devotion. But while pleading for the very fullest liberty of prayer, let us not be insensible of the great benefit there is in ever and anon stepping out of that circle in which our own personal and particular sorrows and sins shape and intensify our prayers, into that upper and wider region in which, laying all those specialities for the time aside, we join

the great company of the prayerful in all ages, in those few and simple, yet all-embracing petitions which they and we, and all that have gone before, and all that shall come after, unite in presenting to the Hearer and Answerer of prayer. And this is what we do in repeating the Lord's prayer. In it we have,—stripped of all secondary or adventitious elements, the concentrated spirit and essence of prayer, a brief epitome of all the topics that prayer should embrace, a condensed expression of all those desires of the heart that should go up to God in prayer. It is not a prayer this for any one period of life—for any one kind of character—for any one outward or inward condition of things—for any one country—for any one age. The child may lisp its simple sentences as soon as it knows how to pray; it comes with no less fitness from the wrinkled lips of age. The penitent in the first hour of his return to God, the struggler in the thick of the spiritual conflict, the believer in the highest soarings of his faith and love, may take up and use alike this prayer. The youngest, the oldest, the simplest, the wisest, the most sin-stained, the most saintly, can find nothing here unsuitable, unseasonable. It gathers up into one

what they all can and should unite in saying as they bend in supplication before God. And from the day when first it was published on the mount, as our Lord's own directory for prayer, down through all these eighteen centuries, it has been the single golden link running through the ages that has bound together in one the whole vast company of the prayerful. Is there a single Christian now living upon earth—is there one among the multitude of the redeemed now praising God in heaven, who never prayed this prayer? I believe not one. It is not then, as isolated spirits, alone in our communion with God, it is as units in that unnumbered congregation of those who have bent, are bending, will bend, before the Throne, that we are to take up and to use this prayer. Not "my Father," but "our Father," is its key-note. Let it calm, and soothe, and elevate our spirits, as, leaving all that belongs to our own little separate circle of thoughts, and doubts, and fears, and hopes, and joys, behind, we rise to take our place in this vast company, and to mingle our prayers with theirs.

And to what is it that the Lord's prayer owes especially the universality of its embrace—the omnipotence of its power? To the spe-

cial character in which it presents God to all—the peculiar standing before him into which it invites all to enter. It is not to him as the great I AM, the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent Creator, and Lord of All; it is not to him as dwelling in the light that no man can approach to—as clothed with all the attributes of majesty and power, and justice and truth and holiness, the Moral Governor of the Universe—that it invites us to come. No, but to him as our Father in heaven—a Father regarding us with infinite pity, loving us with an everlasting love, willing and waiting to bestow, able and ready to help us. Is it to him who taught us this prayer that we owe the revelation of God to us as such a Father. More than that, it is to Christ we owe the establishment of that close and endearing connection of sonship to the Father—a connection which it only remains for us to recognize, in order to enter into possession of all its privileges and joys. He who taught this prayer to his disciples, taught them, too, that no man can come unto the Father but through him. It were a great injustice unto him, if, because he has not named his own name in this prayer, we should forget that it is he who, by his Incarnation and

Atonement, has so linked God and man, earth and heaven, together, that all those sentiments of filial trust and confidence which this prayer expresses, may and should be cherished by every individual member of our race. There is not a living man who may not use this prayer, for while it is true that no man cometh to the Father but through Christ, it is equally true—indeed the one truth is involved in the other—that all men, every man, may now so come ; not waiting till he is sure that he is a child of God, has such faith in God, or gratitude to God, or willingness to serve God as he knows a child should cherish ; not grounding his assurance of God's Fatherhood to him on his sonship to God—no, but welcoming the assurance given to him in and by Jesus Christ, that God is his Father, and using that very Fatherhood as his plea in his first and last, his every approach to him. To each and every one of the multitude upon the mountain-side of Galilee—to them just as they were—to them simply as sons of men, partakers of that humanity which he also shared, Jesus said, “ God is your Father, treat him as your Father, commend your future to him, cast all your care upon him as such.” “ Take no thought,

saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Pray to him as such, then. "When thou prayest, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret." After this manner pray ye—"Our Father which art in heaven." And what Jesus said to the multitude on the mountain-side, he says to every child of Adam. Was it not, indeed, upon the existence and character of that very relationship of God to us and to all men that Jesus grounded the assurance he would have us cherish that our prayers shall not, cannot, go up in vain to heaven? For it is worthy of remark that on both occasions when this prayer was recited within the compass of the same discourse, shortly after he had repeated it—as if his thoughts were returning to the subject, and he wished to fix firm in the hearts of his disciples a faith in the efficacy of such prayer—he added, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh"—asks as I have told you he should, or for what I have told you he should—"every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh,

findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? or if he ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent ? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?”

XIII.

JESUS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.*

CHRIST'S first visit to Peræa, on his way up to the Feast of Dedication, was one of much locomotion and manifold activities. His second was dedicated rather to seclusion and repose. He retired to one chosen and hallowed spot—the place where John at first baptized—where he himself had first entered on his public ministry. Many resorted to him there, and many believed on him, but he did not go about as he had done before. Living in quiet with his disciples, a message came to him from Bethany. Some sore malady had seized upon Lazarus. His sisters early think of that kind friend, who they knew had cured so many others, and who surely would not be unwilling to succor them in their distress, and heal their brother ; but they knew

* John x. 39-42 ; xi. 1-27.

what had driven him lately from Jerusalem, and are unwilling to break in upon his retirement, or ask him to expose himself once more to the deadly hatred of his enemies. The disease runs on its course; Lazarus is on the very point of death. They can restrain no longer. They send off a messenger to Jesus. No urgent entreaty, however, is conveyed that he should hasten to their relief. No course is dictated, No desire even expressed. They think it is not needed. They remember all the kindnesses they had already experienced at his hands—how often he had made their house his home—what special marks of personal attachment and regard he had shown to themselves and to their brother. They deem it enough, therefore, to bid their messenger say, as soon as he met Jesus, “Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.” Jesus hears the message, and, without giving any other indication of his purpose, simply says, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” This is all the answer that he makes to a message so simply and delicately expressed; by that very simplicity and delicacy making all the stronger appeal to his sympathy. Nothing more being said by Jesus, nor

anything further apparently intended to be done, the messenger of the anxious sisters has to be satisfied with this. It seems to be so far satisfactory ; “ This sickness is not unto death.” Jesus either knows that Lazarus is to recover, or he is to take some method of averting death—is to cure him ; may have already done so by a word spoken—a volition formed at a distance. Treasuring up the sentence that he has heard uttered, and extracting from it such comfort as he can, the messenger returns to Bethany, and Jesus remains still two days in the place where he was. During these two days the incidents of the message and the answer fail not to be the subject of frequent converse among the disciples. They too might understand it to be the reason of their Master’s saying and doing nothing further in the matter that he was aware that the death the sisters dreaded was not to happen ; or they too might think that his great power had already been exerted on behalf of one whom they knew he loved so much. So might they interpret the saying, “ This sickness is not unto death ;” but what can they make of those other words by which these had been followed up ? How could it be said of this sickness of Lazarus, whether

it left him naturally or was removed by a mysterious exercise of their Master's powers of healing, that it was to be "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby?" This was saying a great deal more of the illness, however cured, than, so far as they can see, could be truly and fitly said of it. No further explanation, however, is made by Jesus, and they must wait the issue.

Two days afterwards Jesus calmly and resolutely, but somewhat abruptly and unexpectedly, says to them, "Let us go in to Judea again." Though nothing was said or hinted about the object of the proposed visit, it would be very natural that the disciples should connect it with the message that had come from Bethany. But if it was to cure Lazarus that Christ was going, why had he not gone sooner? If the sickness that had been reported to him was not unto death, why go at all?—why expose himself afresh to the malice of those who were evidently bent upon his destruction? "Master," they say to him, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" a remonstrance dictated by a sincere and laudable solicitude for their Master's safety, yet not without ingredients of ignorance and mistrust.

“Are there not,” said Jesus in reply, “twelve hours in the day?” “My time for working, for the doing the will of my Father which is in heaven, is it not a set time, its bounds as fixed as those of the natural day, having, like it, its twelve hours that no man can take from, and no man can add to? The hours of this my allotted period for finishing my earthly work must run out their course; and while they are running, so long as I am upon the path marked out for me, walking by the light that comes from heaven, they cannot be shortened, go where I may; so long as I go under my Father’s guidance, so long as I do what he desires, my life is safe. True, eleven hours of this my day may be already gone; I may have entered upon the last and twelfth, but till it end a shield of defence is round me that none can break through. Fear not for me, then: till that twelfth hour strike I am as safe in Judea as here. And for your own comfort, know that what is true of me is true of every man who walks in God’s own light—the light that the guiding Spirit gives to every man—kindled within his soul to direct him through all his earthly work. If any man walk in that light, he will not, cannot stumble, or fall, or

perish ; but if he walk in the night, go where he is not called, do what he is not bidden, then he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. He has turned the day into night, and the doom of the night-traveller hangs over him."

He pauses to let these weighty truths sink deep into the disciples' hearts, then, turning to them, he says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." In their anxiety about their Master they had forgotten their absent friend whose love to Jesus had flowed over upon them, to whom they also were attached. How humanly, how tenderly does the phrase "our friend Lazarus" recall him to their thoughts! It would seem as if the ties that knit our Lord to the members of that family at Bethany had been formed for this as for other reasons, to show how open the heart of Jesus was, not merely to a universal love to all mankind, but to the more peculiar and specific affections of friendship. Among the twelve there was the one whom he particularly loved ; among the families he visited there was one to which he was particularly attached. Outside the circle of his immediate followers there was one whom he called his friend. Had he not already so distinctly said

that his sickness was not unto death, the disciples, remembering that he had said of Jairus's daughter, "she is not dead, but sleepeth," might at first have caught the true meaning of their Master's words; but the idea of the death of Lazarus is so far from their thoughts, that they put the first interpretation on them that occurs, and without thinking on the worse than trifling end that they were thus attributing to Christ as the declared purpose of his proposed visit, they say, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Then said Jesus unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him." Glad that he was not there! Yes, for it spared him the pain of looking at his friend in his agony, at his sisters in their grief. Glad; for had he been there, could he have resisted the appeal of such a deathbed over which such mourners were bending? Could he, though meaning afterwards to raise him from the dead, have stood by and see Lazarus depart? Glad that he was not there! Was he insensible, then, to all the pangs which that departure must have cost Martha and Mary?—this one among the rest, that he was not there, and had

not come when sent for? Was he insensible to the four days' weeping for the dead that his absence had entailed? Glad that he was not there! Had the mourning sisters heard the words, they might have fancied that his affection for their family had suffered a sudden chill. But there was no lack of sensibility to their sufferings; his sympathies with them had suffered no reverse. It was not that he loved or pitied them the less. It was that his sympathies, instead of resting on the single household of Bethany, were taking in the wider circle of his discipleship, and through them, or along with them, the whole family of our sinful, suffering humanity. It was with a calm, deliberate forethought that on hearing of the sickness, he allowed two days to pass without any movement made to Bethany. He knew when Lazarus died—knew that he had died two days before he told his disciples of it, for the death, followed by speedy burial, must have occurred soon after the messenger left Bethany, in all likelihood before he reached the place where Jesus was; for if a day's journey carried the messenger (as it might have done to Bethabara), and another such day of travel carried Jesus and his disciples back again to Bethany, as

Lazarus was four days in the grave when Jesus reached the spot, his decease must have taken place within a very short time after the original despatch of the message. Knowing when it happened, Jesus did not desire to be present at it—deliberately arranged it so that it should not be till four days after the interment that he should appear in Bethany. He had already in remote Galilee raised two from the dead—one soon after death, the other before burial. But now, in the immediate neighborhood of Jerusalem, in presence of a mixed company of friends and enemies, he has resolved, in raising Lazarus, to perform the great closing, crowning miracle of his ministry; and he will do it so that not the most captious or the most incredulous can question the reality either of the death or of the resurrection. It was to be our Lord's last public appearance among the Jews previous to his crucifixion. It was to be the last public miracle he was to be permitted to work. From the day that this great deed was done was to date the formal resolution of the Sanhedrim to put him to death. This close connection of the raising of Lazarus with his own decease was clearly before his eye. His sayings and doings

at Bethabara show with what deep interest he himself looked forward to the issue. If we cannot with certainty say that no miracle he ever wrought occupied beforehand so much of our Saviour's thoughts, we can say that no other miracle was predicted and prepared for as this one was.

“Lazarus is dead . . . nevertheless let us go unto him.” Had the disciples but remembered their Master's first words, to which the key had now been put into their hands, they might at once have gathered what the object of that journey was in which Jesus invited them to accompany him, and the thought of it might have banished other fancies and other fears. But slow to realize the glory of the coming and predicted miracle, or quick to connect it with the after-risk and danger, they hesitate. One there is among them as slow in faith as the slowest—fuller, perhaps, than any of them of mistrust—yet quick and fervid in his love, seeing nothing but death before Jesus if once he shows himself at Jerusalem—who says unto his fellow-disciples, “Let us also go that we may die with him :” the expression of a gloomy and somewhat obstinate despondency, sinking into despair, yet at the same time of heroic and

chivalrous attachment. Jesus says nothing to the utterer of this speech. He waits for other and after occasions to take Thomas into his hands, and turn his incredulity into warm and living faith.

The group journeys on to Bethany, and at last comes near the village. Some one has witnessed its approach and goes with the tidings to where the mourning sisters and those who have to comfort them are sitting. It may have been into Martha's ear that the tidings are first whispered—Mary beside her, too overwhelmed with grief to hear. As soon as she hears that Jesus is coming, Martha rises and goes out to meet him. Mary, whether she hears or not, sees her sister rise and go, yet stays still in the house—the two sisters, one in her eager movement, the other in her quiet rest, here as elsewhere showing forth the difference of their characters.

Martha is soon in the Saviour's presence. The sight of Jesus fills her heart with strange and conflicting emotions. In his kind look she reads the same affectionate regard he had ever shown. Yet had he not delayed coming to them in their hour of greatest need? She will not reproach, for her confidence is still unbroken. Yet she cannot help feeling what looked like forgetfulness or neglect. Above all such

personal feelings the thought of her dead brother rises. She thinks of the strange words the messenger had reported. She knows not well what they could have meant, to what they could have pointed; but the hope still lingers in her heart, that now that he at last is here, the love and power of Jesus may find some way of manifesting themselves—perhaps even in recalling Lazarus from the dead. And in the tumult of these mixed feelings—in the agitation of regret and confidence, and grief and hope—she breaks out in the simple but pathetic utterance, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”—‘it is what Mary and I have been saying to ourselves and to one another, over and over again, ever since that sad and sorrowful hour. If only thou hadst been here! I do not blame you for not being here. I do not know what can have kept you from coming. I will not doubt or distrust your love—but if thou hadst been here my brother had not died—you could, you would have kept him from dying—you could, you would have raised him up, and given him back to us in health. Nay, “I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”’

The reply of Jesus seems almost to have

been framed for the very purpose of checking the hope that was obviously rising in Martha's breast. "Thy brother," he says, "shall rise again,"—words not indeed absolutely precluding the possibility of a present restoration of her brother to life, but naturally directing her thoughts away from such a restoration to the general resurrection of the dead. Such at least is their effect upon Martha, as is evident from her reply, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day"—a reply which, though it proved the firmness of her faith in the future and general resurrection of the dead, indicated something like disappointment at what Jesus had said.

But our Lord's great object in entering into this conversation had now been gained. Instead of fostering the expectation of immediate relief, he had drawn Martha's thoughts off for a time from the present, and fixed them upon the distant future of the invisible and eternal world. Having created thus the fit opportunity—here on the eve of performing the greatest of his miracles—here in converse with one of sincere but imperfect faith, plunged in grief, and seeking only the recovery of a lost brother, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet

shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die"—as if he had said, ' Martha, Martha, thou wert troubled once when I was in your dwelling with the petty cares of your household, but now a heavier trouble has come upon your heart. You mourn a brother's death, but would that even now I could raise your thoughts above the consideration of the life, the death, the resurrection of the perishable body, to the infinitely more momentous one of the life and the death of the indwelling, the immortal soul ! You are looking to me with a lingering hope that I might find some way to assuage your present grief by giving back to you the brother that lies buried. You believe so far in me as to have the confidence that whatever I ask of God, God would give it me. Would that I could get you and all to look to me in another and far higher character than the assuager of human sorrow, the bringer of a present relief ; that I could fix your faith upon me as the Prince of life, the author, the bestower, the originator, the supporter, the maturer of that eternal life within the soul over which death hath so little dominion—that whosoever once hath this life begun, in dying still lives, and in living can never die.

For let us notice, as helping us to a true comprehension of these wonderful words of our Redeemer, that immediately after their utterance, he addressed to Martha the pointed question, "Believest thou this?" It was not unusual for our Lord to ask some profession of faith in his power to help from those on whom or for whom that power was about to be exerted. He did not need to ask any such profession from Martha. She had already declared her full assurance that he had the power of Deity at command. The very manner in which the question was put to Martha, "Believest thou this?" plainly intimates that some weighty truth lay wrapped up in the words just uttered beyond any to which she had already assented. Had there been nothing in what Christ now said beyond what Martha had previously believed—to which he had already testified—such an interrogation would have been without a meaning. It cannot be a mere proclamation of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, and of Christ's connexion with them, either as their human announcer or their Divine author, that is here made. No such interpretation would explain or justify the language here employed. The primary and general assertion,

"I am the resurrection and the life," gets its only true significance assigned to it by the two explanatory statements with which it was followed up. "I am the life," said Jesus, not in any general sense as being the great originator and sustainer of the soul's existence, but in this peculiar and specific sense, that "whosoever liveth and believeth on me"—or rather, liveth by believing on me—"shall never die." And "I am the resurrection" in this sense, that "whosoever believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Such language connects, in some peculiar way, the life and resurrection that Jesus is now speaking of with believing on him; it at least implies that he has some other and closer connexion with the life and the resurrection of those who believe than he has with that of those who believe not. Jesus, in fact, is here, in these memorable words, only proclaiming to Martha, and through her to the world of sinners he came to save, what the great end of his mission is, and how it is that that end is accomplished. Sin entered into this world, and death—not the dissolution of the body, but spiritual death—this death by sin. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die." And

the death came with the first transgression. The pulse of the true spiritual life, of life in God and to God, ceased its beatings. Death reigned in all its coldness ; the warmth of a pervading love to God had gone, and the chill of a pervading fear seized upon the soul. Death reigned in all its silence, for the voice of ceaseless prayer and praise was hushed. It reigned in all its torpid inactivity, for no longer was there a continued putting forth of the entire energies of the spirit in the service of its Maker. And the same death that came upon the first transgressor has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. And if to be under condemnation be death, if to be carnally-minded be death ; if, amid all the variety of motives by which we naturally are influenced, there be, but at lengthened intervals, a weak and partial regard to that Great Being whom no creature can altogether banish from its thoughts, then surely the Scriptures err not in the representation that it was into a world of the dead that Jesus came. He came to be the quickener of the dead ; having life in himself, to give of this life to all who came to him for it. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you

that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." "And we know that the Son of God is come. This is the true God and eternal life." "And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Such are the testimonies borne by a single apostle in one short epistle (1st Epistle of John). More striking than any other words upon this subject are those of our Lord himself. Take up the Gospel of St. John, the special record of those discourses of our Lord in which he most fully unfolded himself, telling who he was, and what he came to this earth to do, and you will not find one of them in which the central idea of life coming to the dead through him is not presented. Thus, in his conversation with Nicodemus on the occasion of his

first Passover, you hear him say : " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."* Thus, also, in his conversation with the woman of Samaria : " If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living " (life-giving) " water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again : but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."† Thus, also, in his next discourse at Jerusalem, on the occasion of his second Passover : " For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life,

* John iii. 14-16.

† John iv. 10-14

and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life. Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.”* Thus, also, in the great discourse delivered after the feeding of the five thousand : “ This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day. I am that bread of life. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever : and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”† Thus, also, at the Feast of Tabernacles : “ I am the light of the world : he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”‡ Thus, also, at the Feast of Dedication : “ My

* John v. 21, 24, 40. † John vi. 39, 40, 48, 50, 51, 53, 56.

‡ John viii. 12, 51.

sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”* And so also on the eve of his last and greatest miracle : “I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Is there nothing striking in it that, from first to last, running through all these discourses of our Saviour—to be found in every one of them, without a single exception—this should be held out to us by our Lord himself as the great end and object of his life and death,—that we, who were all dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God, should find for these dead souls of ours a higher and everlasting life in him ?

The life of the soul lies, first, in the enjoyment of God’s favor—in the light of his reconciled countenance shining upon it, in the everlasting arms of his love and power embracing it. The great obstacle to our entrance upon this life is conscious guilt—the sense of having forfeited the favor—incurred the wrath of God. This obstacle Christ has taken out of the way

* John x. 27, 28.

by dying for us, by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. There is redemption for us through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. Not that the Cross is a talisman which works with a hidden, mystic, unknown, unfelt power—not that the blood of the great sacrifice is one that cleanseth past guilt away, leaving the old corruption untouched and unsubdued. Jesus is the life in a further and far higher sense than the opener of a free way of access to God through the rent veil of his flesh. He is the perennial source of that new life within, which consists in communion with God—likeness to God—in gratitude, in love, in peace, and joy, and hope—in trusting, serving, submitting, enduring. This life hangs ever and wholly upon him ; all good and gracious affections, every pure and holy impulse, the desire and the ability to be, to do, to suffer—coming to us from him to whose light we bring our darkness, to whose strength we bring our weakness, to whose sympathy our sorrow, to whose fullness our emptiness. Our natural life, derived originally from another, is for a season dependent on its source, but that dependence weakens and at last expires. The infant hangs helplessly upon its mother at the first. But the

infant grows into the child, the child into the man—the two lives separate. Not such our spiritual life. Coming to us at first from Christ, it comes equally and entirely from him ever afterwards. It grows, but never away from him. It gets firmer, more matured; but its greater firmness and maturity it owes to closer contact with him—simpler and more entire dependence on him, deeper and holier love to him. It is as the branch is in the vine, having no life when parted from it; not as a child is in its parent, that believers are in Christ. There is but one relationship, of Son to Father—one wholly unique—which fitly represents this union, which was employed by Christ himself to do so. “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” It is indeed but the infancy of that life which lies in such oneness with the Son and the Father that is to be witnessed here on earth. Yet within that feeble infancy are the germinating seeds of an endless, an ever-progressive, an indestructible existence, raised by its very nature above the dominion of death; bound by ties indissoluble to him who was dead and is

alive again, and liveth for evermore ; an existence destined to run on its everlasting course, getting ever nearer and nearer, growing ever liker and liker to him from whom it flows.

Amid the death-like torpor which hath fallen upon us, stripping us of the desire and power to live wholly in God and wholly for God, who would not wish to feel the quickening touch of the great Life-Giver, Jesus Christ—to be raised to newness of life in him—to have our life bound up with his forever—hid with him in God ? This—nothing less than this, nothing lower than this—is set before us. Who would not wish to see and feel it realized in his present, his future, his eternal existence ? Then, let us cleave to Christ, resolved in him to live, desiring in him to die, that with him we may be raised at last, at the resurrection, on the great day, to those heavenly places where, free from all weakness, vicissitude, corruption, and decay, this life shall be expanded and matured throughout the bright ages of an unshadowed eternity.

XIV.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.*

IT is not likely that Martha understood in its full meaning what Christ had said about his being the resurrection and the life. So far however, as she did comprehend she believed ; and so when Jesus said to her, "Believest thou this?"—understanding that he had spoken about himself, and wished from her some expression of her faith—she said to him, "Yea I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." With crude ideas of the character and offices they attributed to him, many were ready to call Jesus the Christ, to believe that he was the Messiah spoken of by the prophets. Martha's confession went much further than this ; she believed him to be also the Son of God, to be that for claiming to be which the Jews had been

* John xi. 22-54.

ready to stone him, as one making himself equal with God. It may have been, regarding him too much as a mere man having power with God, that she had previously said, "But I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee;" but now that her thoughts are concentrated upon it, she tells out all the faith that is in her, and in so doing ranks herself beside Peter and the very few who at that time could have joined in the confession, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Had Mary and Lazarus not been in his thoughts Jesus might have pronounced over Martha the same benediction that he did over Peter, and said to her, "Blessed art thou, Martha, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." As it is, he simply accepts the good confession, and bids Martha go and call her sister.

Mary had not heard at first of the Lord's coming, or, if she had, was too absorbed in her sorrow to heed it. But now when Martha whispers in her ear, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," she rises and hastens out to where Jesus is outside the village. No one had followed Martha when she went out there.

But there was such an unusual quickness, such a fresh and eager excitement in this movement of Mary, that those around her ran with her and followed, saying, "She goeth to the grave to weep there." Thus did she draw along with her the large company that was to witness the great miracle.

Once again in the Master's presence, Mary is overwhelmed with emotion. She falls weeping at his feet ; has nothing to say as she looks up at him through her tears but what Martha had said before : " Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Her grief checks all further utterance. Nor has Jesus anything to say. Mary is weeping at his feet, Martha is weeping at his side, the Jews are weeping all around. This is what death hath done, desolating a once happy home, rending with bitter grief the two sisters' hearts, melting into kindred sorrow the hearts of friends and neighbors. The calm that had its natural home in the breast of the Redeemer is broken up : he grieves in spirit and is troubled. Too heavy in heart himself, too troubled in spirit, as he stands with hearts breaking and tears falling all around him to have any words of counsel or comfort for Mary such as he addressed to Martha, he can

only say, "Where have ye laid him? They say to him, Lord, come and see." He can restrain no longer. He bursts into tears.

What shall we think or say of these tears of Jesus? There were some among those who saw him shed them, who, looking at them in their first and simplest aspect—as tears shed over the grave of a departed friend—said one to another, "Behold how he loved him!" There were others not sharing so much in the sister's grief, who were at leisure to say, "Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind have caused that even this man should not have died?" "If he could have saved him, why did he not do it? He may weep now himself; had it not been better that he had saved these two poor sisters from weeping?" We take our station beside these men. With the first we say, Behold how he pities! See in the tears he sheds what a singular sympathy with human sorrow there is within his heart—a sympathy deeper and purer than we have ever elsewhere seen expressed. To weep with others or for others is no unusual thing, and carries with it no evidence of extraordinary tenderness of spirit. It is what at some time or other of their lives

all men have done. But there is a peculiarity in the tears of Jesus that separates them from all others—that gives them a new meaning and a new power. For where is Jesus when he weeps? a few paces from the tomb of Lazarus ; and what is he about immediately to do? to raise the dead man from the grave, and give him back to his sisters. Only imagine that, gifted with such a power, you had gone on such an errand, and stood on the very edge of its execution, would not your whole soul be occupied with the great thing you were about to do, the great joy you were about to cause? You might see the sisters of the dead one weeping, but, knowing how very soon you were about to turn their grief into gladness, the sight would only hasten you forward on your way. But though knowing what a perfect balm he was so soon to lay upon all the sorrow, Jesus shows himself so sensitive to the simple touch of grief, that even in such peculiar circumstances he cannot see others weeping without weeping along with them. How exquisitely tender the sympathy manifested in the tears that in such peculiar circumstances were shed!

Again we take our station beside the on-lookers, and to the second set of speakers we

would say—he could have caused that this man had not died. But his are no false tears, though shed over a calamity he could have prevented. He allowed Lazarus to die, he allowed his sisters to suffer all this woe, not that he loved them less, but because he knew that for him, for them, for others, for us all, higher ends were in this way gained than could have been accomplished by his cutting the illness short, and going from Bethabara to cure. Little did the weeping sisters know what a place in the annals of redemption the death and resurrection of their brother was to occupy. How earnestly in the course of the illness did they pray for his recovery! How eagerly did they dispatch their messenger to Jesus! A single beam of light fell on the darkness when the messenger brought back as answer the words he had heard Jesus utter—“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” What other meaning could they put upon the words, but that either their brother was to recover, or Jesus was to interfere and heal him? Their brother died, and all the more bitterly because of their disappointment did they bemoan his loss. But what

thought they when they got him back again—what thought they when they heard of Christ's own death and resurrection—what thought they when they came to know, as they had never done before, that Jesus was indeed the abolisher of death, the bringer of life and immortality to light? Would they then have wished that their brother had not died—that they had been saved their tears, but lost the hallowed resurrection-birth of their brother to his Lord, lost to memory the chieftest treasure that time gave to carry with them into eternity?

Groaning again in spirit, Jesus came to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone covered the niche within which the body of the dead was lying. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." The doing so would at once expose the dead, and let loose the foul effluvium of the advanced decomposition. The careful Martha, whose active spirit ever busied itself with the outward and tangible side of things, at once perceives this, and hastens to interpose a check. Gently, but chidingly, the Lord said unto her, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" 'Was it not told thee in the words

brought back by the messenger that this sickness was to be for the glory of God—a glory waiting yet to be revealed? Have I not been trying to awaken thy faith in myself, as the resurrection and the life? Why think, then, of the existing state of thy brother's body? Why not let faith anticipate the future, and put all such lower thoughts and cares away? The rebuke was gently given; but given at such a time, and in such presence, it must have fallen heavily upon poor Martha's heart.

And now the order is obeyed. Taking a hasty glance within, the removers of the stone withdraw. Jesus stands before the open sepulchre. But all is not ready yet. There is to be a slowness, a solemnity in every step that shall wind up every spirit to the topmost point of expectation. Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven and prays, not to ask God to work the miracle, or give him power to do so. So might Moses, or Elijah, or any other of the great miracle-workers of earlier times have done, proclaiming thereby in whose name it was and by whose power they wrought. Jesus never did so. He stands alone in this respect. All that he did was done indeed in conjunction with the Father. He was careful to declare that the Son did nothing of himself,

nothing independently. It was in faith, with prayer, that all his mighty works were wrought, but the faith was as peculiar as the prayer—both such as he alone could cherish and present. Ordinarily the faith was hidden in his heart, the prayer was in secret, muttered and unheard. But now he would have it known how close was the union between him and the Father. He would turn the approaching miracle into an open and incontrovertible evidence that he was the sent of the Father, the Son of God. And so, in words of thanksgiving rather than of petition, he says, “Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me”—the silent prayer had already been heard and answered—“And I know that thou hearest me always,”—that thy hearing is not peculiar to this case, for as I am always praying, so thou art always answering—“but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.” In no more solemn manner could the fact of his mission from the Father, and of the full consent and continued co-operation of the Father with him in all he said and did, be suspended upon the issue of the words that next come from his lips: “And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice,

Lazarus, come forth." The hour has come for the dead to hear and live. At once, and at that summons, the body lives, starts into life again, not as it had died, the life injected into a worn and haggard frame. It gets back in a moment all its healthful vigor. At once, too, and at that summons, from a dreamless sleep that left it nothing to tell about the four days' interval, or from a region the secrets of which it was not permitted to disclose, the spirit returns to its former habitation. Lazarus rises and stands erect. But he is bound hand and foot, a napkin is over his face and across his eyes. So bound, as good as blind, he could take but a few timid shuffling steps in advance. "Loose him," said Jesus, "and let him go." They do it. He can see now all around. He can go where he pleases. Shall we doubt that the first use he makes of sight and liberty is to go and cast himself at the Redeemer's feet.

"Take ye away the stone," "Loose him, and let him go," Christ could easily by the word of his great power have removed the stone, untied the bandages. But he does not do so. There is to be no idle expenditure of the Divine energy. What human hands are fit for, human hands must do. The earthly and the

heavenly, as in all Christ's workings, blend harmoniously together. So is it still in that spiritual world in which he still is working the wonders of his grace, raising dead souls to life, and nourishing the life that is so begotten.

It is not for us to quicken the spiritually dead. No human voice has power to pierce the closed ear, to reach the dull, cold heart. The voice of Jesus can alone do that. But there are stones of obstruction which keep that voice from being heard. These we can remove. The ignorant can be taught, the name of Jesus be made known, the glad tidings of salvation published abroad. And when at the divine call the new life has entered into the soul, by how many bonds and ligaments, prejudices of the understanding, old holds of the affections, old habits of the life, is it hampered and hindered ! These, as cramping our own or others' higher life, we may help to untie and fling away.

But the crowning lesson of the great miracle is the mingled exhibition that it makes of the humanity and divinity of our Lord. Nowhere, at no time in all his life, did he appear more perfectly human, show himself more openly or fully to be one with us, our true and tender

elder brother, than when he bursts into tears before the grave of Lazarus. Nowhere, at no time, did he appear more divine than when with the loud voice he cried, "Lazarus, come forth," and at the voice the dead arose and came forth. And it is just because there meet in him the richness and the tenderness of an altogether human pity and the fullness of a divine power, that he so exactly and so completely satisfies the deepest inward cravings of the human heart. In our sins, in our sorrows, in our weaknesses, in our doubts, in our fears, we need sympathy of others who have passed through the same experience. We crave it. When we get it, we bless the giver, for in truth it does more than all things else. But there are many barriers in the way of our obtaining it, and there are many limits which confine it when it is obtained. Many do not know us, They are so differently constituted, that what troubles us does not trouble them. They look upon all our inward struggles and vexations as needless and self-imposed, so that just in proportion to the speciality of our trial is the narrowness of the circle from which we can look for any true sympathy. But even were we to find the one in all the earth by nature most

qualified to enter into our feelings, how many are the chances that we should find his sympathy preoccupied, to the full engaged, without time or without patience to make himself so master of all the circumstances of our lot, and all the windings of our thoughts and our affections, as to enable him to feel with us and for us, as he even might have done ! But that which we may search the world for without finding is ours in Jesus Christ. All impediments removed, all limitations lifted off—how true, how tender, how constant, how abiding is his brotherly sympathy—the sympathy of one who knows our frame, who remembers we are dust, of one who knows all about all within us, and who is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, “having himself been tempted in all things like as we are.” It is not simply the pity of God ; with all its fullness and tenderness, that had not come so close to us, taken such a hold of us ; it is the sympathy of a brother-man that Jesus extends to us, free from all the restrictions to which such sympathy is ordinarily subjected.

But we need more than that sympathy ; we need succor. Besides the heart tender enough to pity, we need the hand strong enough to

help, to save us. We not only want one to be with us and feel with us in our hours of simple sorrow, we want one to be with us and aid us in our hours of temptation and conflict, weakness and defeat—one not only to be ever at our side at all times and seasons of this our earthly pilgrimage, but to be near us then, to uphold us then, when flesh and heart shall faint and fail, to be the strength of our hearts then, and afterwards our portion forever. In all the universe there is but one such. Therefore to him, our own loving, compassionate, Almighty Saviour, let us cling, that softly in the bosom of his gentle pity we may repose, and safely, by his everlasting arms, may forever be sustained.

Let us now resume the narrative. The raising^{ing.} of Lazarus was too conspicuous a miracle, it had been wrought too near the city, had been seen by too many witnesses, and had produced too palpable results, not to attract the immediate and fixed attention of the Jewish rulers. Within a few hours after its performance Jerusalem would be filled with the report of its performance. A meeting of the Sanhedrim was immediately summoned, and sat in council as to what should be done. No doubt was raised as

to the reality of this or any other miracles which Christ had wrought. They had been done too openly to admit of that. But now, when many even of the Jews of Jerúsalem were believing in him, some stringent measures required to be taken to check this rising, swelling tide, or who could tell to what it may carry them? There were divisions, however, in the council. It was constituted of Pharisees and of Sadducees, who had been looking at Jesus all through with very different eyes. The Pharisees, from the first, had hated him. He had made so little of all their boasted righteousness, had exalted goodness and holiness of heart and life so far above all ritualistic regularity, had simplified religion so, and encouraged men, however sinful, to go directly to God as their merciful Father, setting aside the pretensions of the priesthood, and treating as things of little worth the labored theology and learning of the schools,—he had been so unsparing besides in exposing the avarice, the ambition, the sensuality that cloaked themselves in the garb of a precise and exclusive and fastidious religionism, that they early felt that their quarrel with him was not to be settled otherwise than by his death. Very early, on the occasion of his second visit

to Jerusalem, they had sought to slay him, at first nominally as a Sabbath-breaker, then afterwards, and still more, as a blasphemer.* In Galilee—to which he had retired to put himself out of the reach of the Pharisees of the capital—their hostility pursued him, till we read of the Pharisees and the Herodians then taking counsel together “how they might destroy him.”† Once and again, at the Feast of Tabernacles and at the Feast of the Dedication, stones had been taken up to stone him to death, officers had been sent to arrest him, and the resolution come to and announced, that if any man should confess that he was the Christ, he should be excommunicated. But as yet no formal determination of the Sanhedrim had been made that he should be put to death. The reason of this delay, for suffering Christ to go at large even for so long a time as he did, was in all likelihood the dominance in the Sanhedrim of the Sadducean element. The Sadducees had their own grounds for disliking the person, the character, the pretensions of Jesus, but they were not so vehement or so virulent in their persecution of him. Caring less about

* John v. 16, 18.

† Mark iii. 6.

religious dogmas and observances than the rival sect, they might have been readier to tolerate him as an excited enthusiast ; but now they also got frightened, for they were the great supporters of the Roman power, and the great fearers of popular revolt. And so, when this meeting of the Great Council was called in haste, Pharisees and Sadducees found common ground in saying to one another, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him ; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Neither party believed that there was any chance of Jesus making a successful revolt, and achieving by that success a liberation from the Roman yoke, as it then lay upon them. The Pharisees, the secret enemies of the foreigner, saw nothing in Jesus of such a warlike leader as the nation longed for and required. The Sadducees, dreading some outbreak, but utterly faithless as to any good issue coming out of it, saw nothing before them as the result of such a movement but the loss of such power as they were still permitted to exercise. And so both combined against the Lord. But there was some loose talking, some doubts were expressed by

men like Nicodemus, or some feebler measures spoken of, till the high priest himself arose,—Caiaphas, the son-in law of Annas, connected thus with that family in which the Jewish pontificate remained for fifty years—four of the sons, as well as the son-in-law of Annas, having, with some interruptions, enjoyed this dignity. All through this period, embracing the whole of Christ's life from early childhood, Annas, the head of this favored family, even when himself out of office, retained much of its power, being consulted on all occasions of importance, and acting as the president of the Sanhedrim. Hence it is that in the closing scenes of our Lord's history Annas and Caiaphas appear as acting conjunctly, each spoken of as High Priest. Caiaphas, like the rest of his family, like all the aristocracy of the Temple, was a Sadducee ; and the spirit both of the family and the sect was that of haughty pride and a bold and reckless cruelty. Caiaphas cut the deliberations short by saying impetuously and authoritatively to his colleagues, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." One life, the life of this Galilean, what is it worth ?

What matters it whether he be innocent or guilty, according to this or that man's estimate of guilt or innocence ; It stands in the way of the national welfare. Better one man perish than that a whole nation be involved in danger, it may be in ruin. The false, the hollow, the unjust plea, upon which the life of many a good and innocent man, guilty of nothing but speaking the plain and honest truth, has been sacrificed, had all the sound, as coming from the lips of the High Priest, of a wise policy, a consultation for the nation's good. Pleased with themselves as such good patriots, and covering with this disguise all the other grounds and reasons for the resolution, it was determined that Jesus should be put to death. It remained only to see how most speedily and most safely it could be accomplished.

Unwittingly, in what he said Caiaphas had uttered a prophecy, had announced a great and central truth of the Christian faith. He had given to the death determined on too limited a range, as if it had been for that nation of the Jews alone that Jesus was to die. But the Evangelist takes up, expounds, and expands his words as carrying with them the broad significance that not for that nation only

was he to die, but that by his death he “should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” Strange ordering of Providence, that here at the beginning and there at the close of our Lord’s passion—here in the Sanhedrim, there upon the cross—here from the Jewish High Priest, there from the Roman governor—words should come by which the unconscious utterers conspired in proclaiming the priestly and kingly authority and office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ !

XV.

THE LAST JOURNEY THROUGH PERÆA : THE TEN
LEPERS—THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM—
THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE—LITTLE CHILDREN
BROUGHT TO HIM—THE YOUNG RULER.*

CHRIST'S stay at Bethany on the occasion of his raising Lazarus from the dead must have been a very short one. The impression and effect of the great miracle was so immediate and so great that no time was lost by the rulers in calling together the council and coming to their decision to put Jesus to death. Hearing of this, no time on his part would be lost in putting himself, now only for a short time, beyond their reach. He retired in the first instance to a part of the country near the northern extremity of the wilderness of Judæa, into a city called Ephraim, identified by many with the modern town of Taiyibeh, which lies

* Luke xvii. 11-37, xviii. 15-27 ; Matt. xix. 1-26 ; Mark x. 1-27.

a few miles northeast of Bethel. After some days of rest in this secluded spot, spent we know not how, the Passover drew on, and Jesus arose to go up to it. He took a circuitous course, passing eastward along the border-line between Galilee and Samaria, which lay not more than half a day's journey from Ephraim, descending into the valley of the Jordan, crossing the river, entering once more into Peræa, travelling through it southward to Jericho. It was during this, the last of all his earthly journeys, that as he entered into a certain village there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, as the law required; but not wishing to let him pass without a trial made of his grace and power, lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." "Go show yourselves unto the priests," was all that Jesus said. He gave this order, and passed on. The first thing that the leper who knew or believed that the leprosy had departed from him had to do, was to submit himself for inspection to the priesthood, that his cure might be authenticated, and he be formally relieved from the restraints under which he had been laid. And this is what these ten men are bidden now to do, whilst as yet no sign of

the removal of the disease appears. Whether they all had a firm faith from the first that they would be cured we may well doubt. Perhaps there was but one among them who had such faith. They all, however, obey the order that had been given ; it was at least worth trying whether anything could come out of it, and as they went they were all cleansed. The moment that the cure was visible, one of them, who was a Samaritan, ere he went forward to the priest, went back to Jesus, glorifying God with a loud voice, and falling at Christ's feet to give him thanks. The other nine went on, had their healing in due course authenticated, returned to their families and friends, but inquired not for their deliverer, nor sought him out to thank him. The contrast was one that Christ himself thought fit to notice. "Were there not ten cleansed," he said, "but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." But now once more the Pharisees betake themselves to their congenial work, asking him when the kingdom of God should come. He corrects their errors, gives them solemn warnings as to a coming of

the Son of Man, in whose issues the men of that generation should be very disastrously involved, adding the two parables of the Unjust Judge and of the Pharisee and the Publican. Once more, however, these inveterate enemies return to the assault. At an earlier period they had sought in his own conduct, or in that of his disciples, to find ground of accusation. Baffled in this, they try now a more insidious method, to which we find them having frequent recourse towards the close of our Lord's ministry. They demand his opinion upon the vexed question of divorce. The two great schools of their Rabbis differed in their interpretation of the law of Moses upon this point. Which side would Jesus take? Decide as he may, it would embroil him in the quarrel. To their surprise he shifted the ground of the whole question from the only one upon which they rested it, the authority of Moses; told them in effect that they were wrong in thinking that because Moses, or God through Moses, tolerated certain practices, that therefore these practices were absolutely right and universally and throughout all time to be observed—furnishing thereby a key to the Divine legislation for the Israelites, which we have been somewhat slow

to use as widely as we should ; told them that it was because of the hardness of their hearts, to prevent greater mischiefs than would have followed a purer and stricter enactment, that the Israelites had been permitted to put away their wives (divorce allowed thus, as polygamy had been), but that from the beginning it had not been so, nor should it be so under the new economy that he was ushering in, in which, save in a single case, the marriage tie was to be indissoluble.

In happy contrast with all such insidious attempts to entangle him in his talk was the next incident of the last journey through Peræa. They brought little children—infants—to him. It is not said precisely who brought them, but can we doubt that it was the mothers of the children ? They brought their little ones to Jesus that he might touch them, put his hands upon them, pray for and bless them. Some tinge of superstition there may have been in this, some idea of a mystic benefit to be conveyed even to infancy by the touch and the blessing of Jesus. But who will not be ready to forgive the mothers here, though this were true, as we think of the fond regard and deep reverence they cherished towards him ? They

see him passing through their borders. They hear it is a farewell visit he is paying. These little babes of theirs shall never live to see and know how good, how kind, how holy a one he is ; but it would be something to tell them of when they grew up, something that they might be the better of all their lives afterwards, if he would but touch them and pray over them. And so they come, carrying their infants in their arms, first telling the disciples what they want. To them it seems a needless if not impertinent intrusion upon their Master's graver labors. What good can children so young as these get from the Great Teacher? Why foist them upon the notice and care of one who has so much weightier things in hand? Without consulting their Master, they rebuke the bringers of the children, and would have turned them at once away. Jesus saw it, and he was "much displeased." There was more than rudeness and discourtesy in the conduct of his disciples. There was ignorance, there was unbelief ; it was a dealing with infants as if they had no part or share as such in his kingdom. The occasion was a happy one—perhaps the only one that occurred—for exposing their ignorance, rebuking their unbelief, and so,

after looking with displeasure at his disciples, Jesus said to them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." We take the last words here in the simplest and most obvious sense, as implying that the kingdom of heaven belongs to infants, is in a measure made up of them. It is quite true that immediately after having said this about the infants Jesus had a cognate word to say to the adults around him. He had to tell them that "whosoever should not receive the kingdom of God as a little child should not enter therein." But that was not said barely and alone as an explanation of his former speech—was not said to take all meaning out of that speech as having any reference to the little children that were then actually in his presence. It might be very true, and a very needful thing for us to know that we must be in some sense like to them before we can enter into the kingdom; but that did not imply that they must become like to us ere they can enter it. If all that Jesus meant had been that of suchlike, *i. e.*, of those who, in some particular, resemble little children, is the kingdom of heaven, we can see much less appropriateness in the rebuke of the

disciples, and in the action of the Lord which followed immediately upon his use of the expression,—his taking the little children up into his arms and blessing them. We accept, then, the expression as implying not simply that of suchlike, but of them is the kingdom of heaven. It may be thought that a shade of uncertainty still hangs over it. John Newton uses the cautious language, “I think it at least highly probable that in those words our Lord does not only, if at all, here intimate the necessity of our becoming as little children in simplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expressly declares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact, that the number of infants who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate of adult believers, that his kingdom may be said to consist of little children.” It is not necessary, however, while adopting generally the interpretation which Newton thought so highly probable, to press it so far, or to infer that the kingdom is said to be of such because they constitute the majority of its members; enough to receive the saying as carrying with it the consoling truth, that to infants as such the kingdom of

heaven belongeth, so that if in infancy they die, into that kingdom they enter. We would be most unwilling to regard this gracious utterance of our Lord, and the gracious act by which it was followed up, as implying something else, or anything less than this.

It is not, however, upon any single saying of our Lord that we ground our belief that all who die in infancy are saved ; it is upon the whole genius, spirit, and object of the great redemption. There is indeed a mystery in the death of infants. No sadder nor more mysterious sight upon this earth than to see a little innocent unconscious babe struggling through the agonies of dissolution, bending upon us those strange imploring looks which we long to interpret but cannot, which tell only of a suffering we cannot assuage, convey to us petitions for help to which we can give no reply. But great as the mystery is which wraps itself around the death, still greater would be that attending the resurrection of infants if any of them perish. The resurrection is to bring to all an accession of weal or woe. In that resurrection infants are to share. Can we believe that, without an opportunity given of personally receiving or rejecting Christ, they shall be subjected to a

greater woe than would have been theirs had there been no Redeemer and no redemption? Then to them his coming into the world had been an unmitigated evil. Who can believe it to be so? Who will not rather believe, that even as without sharing in the personal transgression of the first natural head of our race, without sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, they became involved in death; even so, though not believing here—the chance not given them,—they will share in the benefit of that life which the second, the spiritual Head of our race, has brought in and dispenses? “Your little ones”, said the Lord to ancient Israel, speaking of the entrance into the earthly land of promise,—“Your little ones which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither.” And of that better land into which for us Jesus as the forerunner has entered, shall we not believe that our little ones, who died before they had any knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, go to swell the number of the redeemed, go to raise it to a vast majority of the entire race, mitigating more than we can well reckon the great mystery of

the existence here of so much sin, and suffering, and death.

Setting forth afresh, and now in all likelihood about to pass out of that region, there met him one who came running in all eagerness, as anxious not to lose the opportunity, and who kneeled to him with great reverence as having the most profound respect for him as a righteous man, and who said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus might at once and without any preliminary conversation have laid on him the injunction that he did at the last, and this might equally have served the final end that the Lord had in view, but then we should have been left in ignorance as to what kind of man he was, and how it was that the injunction was at once so needful and so appropriate. It is by help of the preparatory treatment that we are enabled to see further than we should otherwise have done into the character of this petitioner. He was young, he was wealthy, he was a ruler of the Jews. Better than this, he was amiable, he was virtuous, had made it from the first a high object of ambition to be just and to be generous, to use the advantages of his position to win in a right way the favor of

his fellow-men. But notwithstanding, after all the successful attempts of his past life, there was a restlessness, a dissatisfaction in his heart. He had not reached the goal. He heard Jesus speak of eternal life, something evidently far higher than anything he had yet attained, and he wondered how it was to be got at. Nothing doubting but that it must be along the same track that he had hitherto been pursuing, but by some extra work of extraordinary merit, he comes to Jesus with the question, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus saw at once that he was putting all upon moral goodness, some higher virtue to be reached by his own effort entitling him to the eternal life. He saw that he was so fully possessed with this idea that it regulated even his conception of Christ's own personal character, whom he was disposed to look upon rather as a pre-eminently virtuous man than one having any peculiar relationship to God. Checking him, therefore, at the very first—taking exception to the very form and manner of his address, he says, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."

Endeavoring thus to raise his thoughts to the

true source of all real goodness, rather than to say anything about his own connexion with the Father, which it is no part of his present object to speak about, Jesus takes him first upon his own ground. There need be no talk about any one particularly good thing, that beloved to be done, till it was seen whether the common acknowledged precepts of God's law had all been kept. "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and thy mother." As the easiest instrument of conviction, as the one that lay entirely in the very region to which all this youth's thoughts and efforts had been confined, Jesus restricted himself to quoting the precepts of the second table of the law, and says nothing in the meantime about the first. The young man, hearing the challenge, listens to the precepts as they are detailed, and promptly, without apparently a momentary misgiving, he answers, "All these have I observed from my youth." There was no doubt great ignorance, great self-deception in this reply. He knew but little of any one of these precepts in its true significance, in all the strictness, spirituality, and extent of its requirements, who

could venture on any such assertion. Yet there was sincerity in the answer, and it pointed to a bygone life of singular external propriety, and that the fruit not so much of constraint as of a natural amiableness and conscientiousness. As he gave this answer, Jesus beholding him, loved him. It was new and refreshing to the Saviour's eye to see such a specimen as this of truthfulness and purity, of all that was morally lovely and of good report among the rulers of the Jews. Here was no hypocrite, no fanatic, here was one who had not learned to wear the garb of sanctimoniousness as a cover for all kinds of self-indulgence ; here was one free from the delusion that the strict observance of certain formulas of devotion would stand instead of the mightier matters of justice and of charity ; here was one who so far had escaped the contagion of his age and sect, who was not seeking to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but was really striving to keep himself from all that was wrong, and to be towards his fellow-men all that, as he understood it, God's law required. Jesus looked upon this man and loved him.

But the very love he bore him prompted Jesus to subject him to a treatment bearing in

many respects a likeness to that to which he subjected Nicodemus. With not a little, indeed, that was different, there was much that was alike in the two rulers,—the one who came to Jesus by night at the beginning of his ministry in Judea ; the one who now comes to him by day at the close of his labors in Peræa : both honest, earnest men, seekers after truth, and lovers of it in a fashion too, but both ignorant and self-deceived ; Nicodemus's error rather one of the head than of the heart, flowing from an entire misconception of the very nature of Christ's kingdom ; the young ruler's one of the heart rather than of the head, flowing from an inordinate, an idolatrous attachment to his worldly possessions. In either case Christ's treatment was quick, prompt, decisive, laying the axe at once at the root of the evil. Beneath all the pleasing show of outward moralities Christ detected in the young ruler's breast a lamentable want of any true regard to God, any recognition of his supreme and paramount claims. His heart, his trust, his treasure, were in earthly, not in heavenly things. He needed a sharp lesson to teach him this, to lay bare at once the true state of things within. Christ was too kind and too skillful a physician to ap-

ply this or that emollient that might have power to allay a symptom or two of the outward irritation. At once he thrusts the probe into the very heart of the wound. "One thing thou lackest: go thy way," said he, at once assuming his proper place as the representative of God and of his claims,—“go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” The one thing lacking was not the renunciation of his property in bestowing it upon the poor. It was a supreme devotedness to God, to duty—a willingness to give up anything, to give up everything where God required it to be given up, when the holding of it was inconsistent with fidelity to him. This was the one thing lacking. And instead of proclaiming his fatal deficiency in this primary requirement, without which there could be no true obedience rendered to any part of the Divine law, Christ embodies the claim which he knew the young ruler was unprepared to honor—in that form which struck directly at the idol of his heart, and required its instant and absolute dethronement.

Not for a moment, then, can we imagine that in speaking to him as he did, Jesus was issuing a general command, or laying down a

universal condition of the Christian discipleship, or that he was even holding up the relinquishment of earthly possessions as an act of pre-eminent meritoriousness, which all strivers after Christian perfection should set before them as the summit to be reached. There is nothing of all this here. It is a special treatment of a special case. Christ's object being to frame and to apply a decisive touchstone or test whereby the condition of that one spirit might be exposed, he suited with admirable skill the test to the condition. Had that condition been other than it was, the test employed had been different. Had it been the love of pleasure, or the love of power, or the love of fame, instead of the love of money that had been the ruling passion, he would have framed his order so that obedience to it would have demanded the crucifixion of the ruling passion, the renunciation of the one cherished idol. The only one abiding universal rule that we are entitled to extract from this dealing of our Lord with this applicant being this — that in coming to Christ, in taking on the yoke of the Christian discipleship, it must be in the spirit of an entire readiness to part with all that he requires us to relinquish, and to allow no

idol to usurp that inward throne, that of right is his.

Christ's treatment, if otherwise it failed, was in one respect eminently successful. It silenced, it saddened, it sent away. No answer was attempted. No new question was raised. The demand was made in such broad, unmitigated, unambiguous terms, that the young ruler, conscious that he had never felt before the extent or pressure of such a demand, and that he was utterly unprepared to meet, turned away disappointed and dissatisfied. Jesus saw him go, let him go, followed him with no importunities, besought him not to return and to reconsider. It was not the manner of the Saviour to be importunate,—you do not find in him any great urgency or iteration of appeal. When once in any case enough is said or done, the individual dealt with is left to his own free will. Gazing after this young ruler as he departed, Jesus then looked round about, and saith to his disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples were astonished at these words, as well they might. What! was the ease or the difficulty of entering into this kingdom to be measured by the little or by the

more of this world's goods that each man possessed? A strange premium this on poverty, as strange a penalty on wealth. Jesus notices the surprise that his saying had created, and, aware of the false track along which his disciples' thoughts were running, in a way as affectionate as it was instructive, proceeded to explain the real meaning of what he had just said. "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" It is not the having but the trusting that creates the difficulty. It is not the kind or the quantity of the wealth possessed, but the kind or quantity of the attachment that is lavished upon it. The love of the penny may create as great impediment as the love of the pound. Nor is it our wealth alone that operates in this way, that raises a mighty obstacle in the way of entering into the kingdom. It is anything else than God and Christ upon which the supreme affection of the spirit is bestowed. A new light dawns upon the disciples' minds as they listen to and begin to comprehend the explanation that their Master now has given, and see the extent to which that explanation goes. They were astonished at the first, but now the astonishment is more than

doubled ; for if it indeed be true, that before any individual of our race can cross the threshold of the kingdom such a shift of the whole trust and confidence of the heart must take place,—if every earthly living creature,—attachment must be subordinated to the love of God and of Jesus Christ his Son, who then can be saved ? for who can effect this great revolution within his own heart, who can take the dearest idol he has known and cast it down in the dust, who can lay hand upon the usurper and eject him, who can raise the rightful owner of it to the throne ? Astonished out of measure, the disciples say among themselves, “ Who then can be saved ? ” Is the question needless or inappropriate ? Now is the time, if they have fallen into any mistake, if they are taking too dark, too gloomy views of the matter, if there be aught of error or of exaggeration in the conceptions out of which this question springs,—now is the time for Jesus to rectify the error, to remove the misconception. Does he do so ? Nay, but assuming that it is even so—as difficult to be saved as they imagine—his reply is, “ With man it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible.” Taught then by our Lord himself to

know what all true entering into his kingdom implies and presupposes, let us be well assured that to be saved in his sense of the word is no such easy thing as many fancy, the difficulty not lying in any want of willingness on his part to save us, not in any hindrance whatever lying there without. All such outward impediments have been, by his own gracious hand, and by the work of his dear Son our Saviour, removed. The difficulty lies within, in our misplaced affections, in our stubborn and obstinate wills, in hearts that will not let go their hold of other things to clasp him home to them as their only satisfying good. Do you feel the difficulty,—the moral impossibility of this hindrance being taken away by ourselves? Then will you pray to him with whom this, as everything, is possible, that he may turn the possibility into reality. He has done so in the case of multitudes as weak, as impotent as you. He will do it unto you if you desire that it be done, and commit the doing of it into his hands.

XVI.

JESUS AT JERICO—THE REQUEST OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE.*

NO district of the Holy Land is more unlike what it once was and what it still might be than that in which Jericho, the city of palms, once stood. Its position, commanding the two chief passes up to the hill country of Judea and Samaria, the depth and fertility of its well-watered soil, and the warmth of its tropical climate, early indicated it as the site of a city which should not only be the capital of the surrounding territory, but the protection of all western Palestine against invaders from the east. Joshua found it so when he crossed the Jordan ; and as his first step towards the conquest of the country which lay beyond, laid siege to a city which had walls broad enough to have houses built upon them, and whose

* Matt. xx. 17-34 ; Mark x. 2-52 ; Luke xviii. 35-43, xx. 2-10.

spoil when taken, its gold and its silver, its vessels of brass and of iron, its goodly Babylonish garments, bore evidences of affluence and of traffic. No town in all the territory which the Israelites afterwards acquired westward of Jordan could compete with Jericho. It fell, was reduced to ruins, and the curse of Joshua pronounced upon the man who attempted to raise again its walls.* In the days of Ahab that attempt was made, and though the threatened evil fell upon the maker, the city rose from its ruins to enter upon another stage of progressive prosperity, which reached its highest point when Herod the Great selected it as one of his favorite resorts, beautified it with towers and palaces, becoming so attached to it that, feeling his last illness to have come upon him, he retired there to die. Soon after his death the town was plundered, and some of its finest buildings were destroyed. These, however, were speedily restored to all their original splendor by Archelaus and as he left

* Within two miles of it, sharing in all its great natural advantages, stood Gilgal, the first encampment of the Israelites, where the ark stood till its removal to Shiloh, which we read of as one of the stations to which Samuel resorted in administering justice throughout the country, where the tribes so often met in the days of Saul, to which the men of Judah went down to welcome David back again to Jerusalem.

it Josephus has described it—its stately buildings rising up among groves of palm-trees miles in length, with gardens scattered round, in which all the chief flowers and fruits of eastern lands grew up in the greatest luxuriance. The rarest and most precious among them, the balsam, a treasure “worth its own weight in silver, for which kings made war,”* “so that he,” says the Jewish historian, as he warms in his recital of all its glories, “he who should pronounce the place to be divine would not be mistaken, wherein is such plenty of trees produced as is very rare, and of the most excellent sort. And, indeed, if we speak of these other fruits, it will not be easy to light on any climate in the habitable earth that can well be compared to it.”

And such as Josephus has described was Jericho and the country around when Christ's eye rested on them, in descending into the valley of the Jordan, and above the tops of the palm-trees, and the roofs of the palaces, he saw the trace of the road that led up to Jerusalem. None beside the twelve had gone with him into the retreats of Ephraim and Peræa. But now

* Martineau.

he is on the track of the companies from the north, who are going up to the Passover, that is to be celebrated at the close of the following week. The time, the company, the road, all serve to bring up to the Saviour's thoughts events that are now so near, to him of such momentous import. A spirit of eager impatience to be baptized with the impending baptism seizes upon him, and gives a strange quickness and a forwardness to his movements. His talk, his gait, his gestures all betoken how absorbed he is ; the eye and thought away from the present, from all around, fixed upon some future, the purport of which has wonderfully excited him. His hasty footsteps carry him on before his fellow-travellers. "Jesus went before them," St. Mark tells us, "and they were amazed ; and as they followed they were afraid." There was that in his aspect, attitude, and actions that filled them with wonder and with awe. It was not long till an explanation was offered them. He took the twelve aside, and once again, as twice before, but now with still greater minuteness and particularity of detail, told them what was about to happen within a few days at Jerusalem, how he was to be delivered into the hands of the

Jewish rulers, and how they were to deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles, how he was to be mocked and scourged, and spit upon and crucified, till all things that were written by the prophets concerning him should be accomplished, and how on the third day he was to rise again. Everything was told so plainly that we may well wonder that any one could have been at any loss as to Christ's meaning: but the disciples, we are told, "understood none of these things, and the sayings were hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." This only proves what a blinding power preconception and misconception have in hiding the simplest things told in the simplest language—a blinding power often exercised over us now as to the written, as it was then exercised over the apostles as to their Master's spoken words. The truth is, that these men were utterly unprepared at the time to take in the real truth as to what was to happen to their Master. They had made up their minds, on the best of evidence, that he was the Messiah. He had himself lately confirmed them in that faith. But they had their own notions of the Messiahship. With these such sufferings and and such a death as were actually before Jesus

were utterly inconsistent. They could be but figurative expressions, then, that he had employed, intended, perhaps, to represent some severe struggle with his adversaries through which he had to pass before his kingdom was set up and acknowledged.

One thing alone was clear—that the time so long looked forward to had come at last. This visit to Jerusalem was to witness the erection of the kingdom. All other notions lost in that, the thought of the particular places they were to occupy in that kingdom entered again into the hearts of two of the apostles—that pair of brothers who, from early adherence, and the amount of sacrifice they had made, and the marked attention that on more than one occasion Jesus had paid to them, might naturally enough expect that if special favors were to be dispensed to any, they would not be overlooked. James and John tell their mother Salome, who has met them by the way, all that they have lately noticed in the manner of their Master, and all that he has lately spoken, pointing to the approaching Passover as the season when the manifestation of the kingdom was to be made. Mother and sons agree to go to Jesus with the request that in his kingdom and

glory the one brother should sit upon his right hand and the other upon his left, a request that in all likelihood took its particular shape and form from what Jesus had said but a few days before, when, in answer to Peter's question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* What could these thrones, this judging be ? Little wonder that the apostles' minds were set a-speculating by what still leaves us, after all speculating, about as much in the dark as ever. But while Salome and James and John were proffering their request, and trying to pre-engage the places of highest honor, where was Peter ? It had not come into *his* thoughts to seek a private interview with his Master for such a purpose. He had no mother by his side to fan the flame that was as ready to kindle in his as in any of their breasts. That without any thought of one

* Matt. xix. 27, 28.

whose natural claims were as good as theirs, James and John should have gone to Jesus and made the request they did, satisfies us at least of this, that it was not the understanding among the twelve that when the Lord had spoken to Peter as he did after his good confession, he had assigned to him the primacy, or indeed any particular pre-eminence, over the rest.

“Ye know not what ye ask.” They did it ignorantly, and so far they obtain mercy of the Lord. What it was to be placed on his right and on his left in the scenes that awaited him in Jerusalem, two at least of the three petitioners, John and Salome, shall soon know as they stand gazing upon the central cross of Calvary. “Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say, We can.” From this reply it would appear that the disciples understood the Lord as asking them whether they are prepared to drink along with him some cup of sorrow that was about soon to be put into his hands, to be baptized along with him in some baptism of fire to which he was about to be subjected. They are prepared, they think that they can follow him, they are

willing to take their part in whatever suffering such following shall entail. Through all the selfishness, and the ambition, and the great ignorance of the future that their request revealed, there shone out in this prompt and no doubt perfectly sincere and honest reply, a true and deep attachment to their Master, a readiness to suffer with him or for him. And he is far quicker to recognize the one than to condemn the other. "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." 'You, James, shall be the first among the twelve that shall seal your testimony with your blood. You, John, shall have the longest if not the largest experience of what the bearing of the cross shall bring with it. But to sit on my right and on my left in my kingdom and my glory; ask me not for that honor as if it were a thing in the conferring of which I am at liberty to consult my own individual will or taste or humor. It is not mine so to dispense. It is mine to give, but only to those for whom it is prepared of my Father, and who by the course of discipline through which he shall pass them shall be duly prepared for it.

James and John have to be content with

such reply. Their application, though made to Christ when alone, soon after became known to others, and excites no small stir among them. Which of them indeed may cast the first stone at the two? They had all been quarreling among themselves not long before, as to which of them should be greatest. And they shall all ere long be doing so again. Christ's word of rebuke as he hears of this contention is for all as well as for James and John. He tells us that no such kind of authority and power as is practiced in earthly government—the authority of men, rank, or power carrying it dictatorially and tyrannically over subjects and dependents—is to be admitted among his disciples; greatness among them being a thing to be measured not by the amount of power possessed, but by the amount of service rendered, by their greater likeness to the Son of Man, “who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” The contention is thus momentarily hushed, to break out again, when it shall receive a still more impressive rebuke.

Jesus and his disciples, and a great multitude of people who had joined themselves to him by the way, now drew near to Jericho. Of what

occurred in and near the city I offer no continuous narrative, for it is difficult to frame such out of the details which the different Evangelists present. St. Mark and St. Luke tell us of one blind man only who was healed. St. Matthew tells us of two. Two of the three Evangelists speak of the healing as having occurred on Christ's departure out of town, the third of its having taken place on his entrance into it. We may conclude with certainty that there were two, and we may conjecture that there were three blind men cured on this occasion. In a city so large as Jericho then was, computed to contain well-nigh 100,000 inhabitants,—the number swelled by the strangers on their way to the Passover,—it would not surprise us that more cases than one of the kind described should have occurred. One general remark upon this and all similar discrepancies in the Gospel narratives may be offered. It is quite enough to vindicate the entire truthfulness of each separate account, that we can imagine some circumstance or circumstances omitted by all, the occurrence of which would enable us to reconcile them. How often does it happen that two or three witnesses each tell what they saw and heard; their testi-

monies taken by themselves present almost insuperable difficulties in the way of reconciling them ; yet when the whole in all its minute details is known, the key is then put into our hands by which the apparent discord is at once removed. And when the whole never can be known, is it not the wisest course to let the discrepancies remain just as we find them ; satisfied if we can imagine any way by which all that each narrator says is true ?

This can easily enough be done in the case before us. Satisfied with this, let us fix our attention on the stories of Bartimeus and Zaccheus, on the two striking incidents by which our Lord's entrance into and exit from Jericho were made forever memorable. How different in all the outward circumstances of their lot in life were these two men!—the one a poor blind beggar, the other among the richest men in the community. The revenues derived from the palm-trees and balsam-gardens of Jericho were so great, that the grant of them was one of the richest gifts which Antony presented Cleopatra. Herod farmed them of the latter, and intrusted the collection of them to these publicans, of whom Zaccheus was the chief. His position was one enabling him to

realize large gains, and we may believe that of that position he had taken the full advantage. Unlike in other things, in this Bartimeus and Zaccheus were at one,—in their eagerness, their earnestness, their perseverance, their resolution to use all possible means to overcome all obstacles thrown in the way of their approach to Christ. The poor blind beggar sits beneath the shade of some towering palm, waiting to salute each stray passenger as he goes by, and solicit alms. Suddenly he hears the tread as of a great multitude approaching. He wonders what it can be. He asks ; they tell him that Jesus of Nazareth is coming, and is about to pass by. Jesus of Nazareth ! he had heard of him before, heard of healings wrought by him, of blind eyes opened, of dead men raised. Many a time in his darkness, in his solitude, as he sat alone by the wayside, he had pondered who this great miracle-worker could be, and he had come to the conclusion that he could be no other than the Son of David, the Messiah promised to their fathers. It had never crossed his thoughts that he and this Jesus should ever meet, when now they tell him that he is near at hand, will soon be passing by. He can, he may do that for him

which none but he can do. The whole faith and hope of his spirit breathed into it, he lifts the loud and eager cry, "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me." They check him, they blame him, in every way they can they try to stop him. He cries "the more a great deal ;" it is his one and only chance. He will not lose it, he will do all he can to reach that ear, to arrest that passer-by. He cries the more a great deal, "Son of David, have mercy on me."

So it is with the poor blind beggar, and so is it with the rich publican. He too hears that Jesus of Nazareth is coming into Jericho. He too has heard much about the Nazarene. He is living now, he may have been living then, in the very neighborhood where John the Baptist taught, where Jesus was himself baptized. The gospel of the kingdom as preached by both, the gospel of repentance, of turning from all iniquity and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, was familiar to his ears. The Baptist's answer to publicans when they came to him, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you," had sunk into his heart. That was the kingdom, the kingdom of truth, of righteousness, into which now above all things he desired to enter

With a conscience quickened, a heart melted and subdued, we know not how, he hears that Jesus is at hand. What would he not give even for a sight of one whom secretly he has learned to reverence and to love ! He goes out, but there is a crowd coming ; he cannot stand its pressure ; he is little of stature, and in the bustle and the throng will not be able even to catch a sight of Jesus. A happy thought occurs : he sees behind him a large tree which casts its branching arms across the path. He runs and climbs up into the tree. He cares not for the ridicule with which he may be assailed. He cares not for the grotesque position which he, the rich man and the honorable, may be seen to occupy. He is too bent upon his purpose to let that or anything stand in the way of the accomplishment of his desire.

And now let us notice how these two men are treated. Jesus stands still as he comes near the spot where poor Bartimeus stands and cries, points to him, and tells those around him to go and bring him into his presence. The crowd halts. The messengers do Christ's bidding. And now the very men who had been rebuking Bartimeus for his too loud and too impatient entreaties, touched with pity, say, " Be of good

comfort, rise, he calleth thee." He does not need to be told a second time, he does not wait for any guiding hands to lead him to the centre of the path. His own quick ear has fixed the point from which the summons comes. His own ready arm flings aside the rude garment that he had worn, which might hinder him in his movement. A few eager footsteps taken, he stands in the presence of the Lord. Nor has he then to renew his supplication. Jesus is the first to speak. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" There are not many things among which to choose. There is that one thing that above all others he would have done. "Lord," says he, "that I might receive my sight." And Jesus said, "Receive thy sight, go thy way ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight."

See now how it fares with Zaccheus. He has got up into the tree, he is sitting there among its branches, half hoping that, seeing all, he may remain himself unseen. The crowd comes up. He does not need to ask which is the one he desires so much to see. There he is, the centre of the throng, his calm, majestic, benignant look and bearing marking him off from all around. The eyes of the chief publi-

can are bent upon him in one fixed concentrated gaze of wonder and of love, when a new ground of wonder and of gratitude is given. Here too Jesus stops, and looking up he names him by his name, as if he had known him long and well. "Zaccheus," he said, "make haste and come down ; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Such is the free spontaneous mercy in either case exercised by our Lord, such is the way in which he meets simplicity of faith, ardor of desire, strenuousness of effort, as seen in the blind beggar and in the rich publican. And what in either case is the return ? "Go thy way," said Jesus to Bartimeus. He did not go, he could not go. His blinded eyes are opened. The first object they rest on is their opener. Bright shines the sun above—fair is that valley of the Jordan—gorgeous the foliage of the palm and the sycamore, the acacia and the balsam-tree. New and wondrous sights to him, but he sees them not, or heeds them not. That fresh faculty of vision is exercised on him by whom it had been bestowed, and upon him all the wealth of its power is lavished. And him "he follows, glorifying God." Not otherwise is it with Zaccheus : "Make

haste," said Jesus, "and come down. And he made haste and came down, and received Christ joyfully," little heeding the derisive looks cast on him as he made his quick descent the murmurings that arose from the multitude as he received Jesus into his house. The threshold is scarcely crossed when he stands in all humility before Jesus and says, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." One scarce can tell whether he is describing a practice for some time previously pursued, or a purpose then for the first time in the presence of Jesus deliberately taken. In either case the evidence of a true repentance on his part is the same. The man among the Jews who gave the fifth part of his income to the poor was counted as having reached the height of perfection as to almsgiving. Zaccheus gives one-half, and not one-fifth. The law of Moses required in one special case alone that a fourfold restitution should be made. Zaccheus in every instance in which he can remember that by any dishonorable practice on his part any man had suffered loss, promises that restitution to that extent should be made to him. Jesus,

accepting the evidence of a true repentance that is thus presented, makes no criticism upon the course of conduct indicated, suggests no change, but says, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham"—once a lost sheep of the chosen fold, lost, but now found by the good Shepherd, and by him welcomed back,—“for the Son of man,” he adds “is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

One general feature of these incidents at Jericho let us now glance at, as singularly appropriate to this particular period of our Lord's history,—the absence of all reserve, the full disclosure of himself and of his redemption which he makes. Other blind men had called him the Son of David, but he had straitly charged them not to make him known. No such charge is given to Bartimeus. He is permitted to follow him and glorify God as loudly, as amply as he can. Not till the last stage of his ministry in the north had he ever spoken even to his disciples of his death. Now he not only speaks of them more plainly and explicitly than ever before, but he goes on to announce the great intention and object of his death. The Son of man, he declares, is come “to give

his life a ransom for many, to seek and to save that which was lost." Thus it is, as the time is now so near, and as all the reasons for that reserve which Jesus had previously studied are removed, that he holds up his death as the payment of the great price of our redemption, the ransom given by the Living One for the lost.

Two better instances illustrative of how the sinner and the Saviour are brought together, of what true faith is, and what true repentance, you could not well desire, than those of Bartimeus and Zaccheus, capable each of manifold spiritual applications. We can but gather up the general warnings and great encouragements that they convey. Sinners we all by nature and practice are—as poor, as blind, as beggared as Bartimeus was—as thoughtless, careless, reckless, worldly-minded as Zaccheus. And Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. It is but a single day we have for meeting with him, that short day of life, the twelve hours of which are so swiftly running out. Let us but be as earnest to see him as those two men were, as careless of what others say or do, as resolute to overcome all difficulties, and we shall find that he will be as ready to hear, to heal, to come to us, to take up his abode with us, to bring sal-

vation with him, to gather us, the lost, into the fold of the saved.

Jericho is changed from what it was. So little is left of the city, of its hippodrome and amphitheatre, its towers and its palaces, that it is difficult to determine its site. Its gardens and its groves are gone, not one solitary palm-tree for a poor blind beggar to sit beneath, nor a sycamore for any one to climb. The City of Fragrance it was called of old. There remains now but the fragrance of those deeds of grace and mercy done there by him who in passing through it closed his earthly journeyings, and went up thence to Jerusalem to die.

XVII.

HE ANOINTING AT BETHANY.*

IN the whole bearing and conduct of Jesus in and about Jericho there was much to indicate that some great crisis in his history was at hand. It does not surprise us to be told of the disciples believing "that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." It was because he knew that they were so misconceiving the future that lay before him and them, that, either in the house of Zaccheus, or afterwards on the way up to Jerusalem, Jesus addressed to them the parable of the Pounds. He would have them know, and could they but have penetrated the meaning of that parable they would have seen, that so far from any such kingdom as they were dreaming of being about to be set up for him in Jerusalem, he was going through the dark avenue of death to another, to a far country, to receive the king-

* Matt. xxvi. 6-13 ; Mark xiv. 3-9 ; John xii. 1-8.

dom there, and after a long interval to return; and that, so far from their being about to share the honors and rewards of a newly erected empire, they were to be left without a head, each man to occupy and to labor till he came again. Another parable, that of the Laborers in the Vineyard, spoken but a day or two before, had a kindred object—was intended to check the too eager and ambitious thirst for the distinctions and recompences that the apostles imagined were on the eve of being dispensed. The addressing of two such parables as these to his disciples, with the specific object of rectifying what he knew to be their false ideas and expectations, the readiness with which he listened to the cry of the blind beggars by the wayside, and the interest that he took in the chief of the publicans, conspire to show how far from a mere narrow or selfish one was the interest with which Jesus looked forward to what was awaiting him in Jerusalem. During the two days' journey from Peræa through Jericho to the holy city, his thoughts were often and absorbingly fixed on his approaching sufferings and death, but it was not so much in their isolated and personal as in their public and world-wide bearings and issues that he was

contemplating them ; nor had the contemplation any such effect as to make him less attentive to the state of thought and feeling prevailing among his disciples, or less ready to be interested in those who, like Bartimeus and Zaccheus, threw themselves in his way.

In coming down into the valley of the Jordan, Jesus had joined the large and growing stream of people from the north and the east, passing up to the approaching Passover. There would be many Galileans among the group who had not seen him now for many months, and who, if they had not heard of it before, must have heard now at Jericho of all that had happened at the two preceding Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication, of his last great miracle at Bethany, of the great excitement that had been created, and of the resolution of the Sanhedrim to put him to death. And now he goes up to face these rulers, to throw himself, as they fancy, upon the support of the people, to unfold the banner of the new kingdom, and call on all his followers to rally round it. His Galilean friends heartily go in with what they take to be his design ; they find the people generally concurring in and disposed to further them. One can imagine what was thought

and felt, and hoped and feared, by those who accompanied Jesus as he left Jericho. A few hours' walk would now carry him and them to the metropolis. It was Friday, the 8th day of their Jewish month Nisan. The next day was Saturday, their Jewish Sabbath. On the Thursday following the lamb was to be slain, and the Passover festival to commence. The great body of the travellers press on, to get into the town before the sunset, when the Sabbath commences. Jesus and his apostles turn aside at Bethany, where the house of Martha and Mary and Lazarus stands open to receive them. Here in this peaceful retreat the next day is spent, a quiet Sabbath for our Lord before entering on the turmoil of the next few days. The companions of his last day's journey have in the meantime passed into Jerusalem. It is already thronged with those who had come up from the country to purify themselves for the feast. With one and all the engrossing topic is Jesus of Nazareth. Gathering in the courts of the Temple, they ask about him, they hear what has occurred; they find that "both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take

him." What, in the face of such an order, will Jesus do? "What think ye," they say to one another, "that he will *not* come to the feast?" But now they hear from the newly arrived from Jericho that he is coming, means to be at the feast, is already at Bethany. They hear that Lazarus, the man whom he so recently raised from the dead, is also there. He may not have been there till now. He may have accompanied Jesus to Ephraim, or chosen some other place of temporary retreat, for a bitter enmity had sprung up against him as well as against Jesus. "The chief priests had consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews believed on Jesus." Whether he had retired for a time or not, Lazarus is now at Bethany. Many, unable to restrain their curiosity, go out to the village, "not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also." It was but a short distance, not much more than the Sabbath-day's journey. During this day, while Jesus and Lazarus are there together, many visitors go forth to feast their eyes upon the sight, and on returning to quicken the excitement among the multitude.

It was on the evening of the Saturday, when

the Sabbath was over, and the next, the first day of the week, had begun, that they made Jesus a supper in the house of Simon, who once had been a leper, some near relative in all likelihood of the family of Lazarus, and Jesus sits at this feast between the one whom he had cured of his leprosy and the other whom he had raised from the dead. Martha serves. She had not so read the rebuke before administered to her as to believe that serving—the thing that she most liked, to which her disposition and her capabilities at once prompted her—was in itself unlawful or improper, that her only duty was to sit and listen. But she had so profited by the rebuke that, concerned as she is that all due care be taken that this feast be well got through, she turns now no jealous look upon her sister, leaves Mary without murmuring or reproach to do as she desires. And Mary seizes the opportunity now given. She has not now Jesus to herself. She cannot, as in the privacy of her own dwelling, sit down at his feet to listen to the gracious words coming from his lips. But she has an alabaster phial of fragrant ointment—her costliest possession—one treasured up for some unknown but great occasion. That occasion

has arrived. She gets it, brings it, approaches Jesus as he sits reclining at the table, pours part of its contents upon his head, and resolves that its whole contents shall be expended upon this office. She compresses the yielding material of which the phial was composed, breaks it, and pours the last drop of it upon his feet, flinging away the relics of the broken vessel, and wiping his feet with her hair. Kingly guest at royal banquet could not have had a costlier homage of the kind rendered to him. That Mary had in her possession so rich a treasure may be accepted as one of the many signs that her family was one of the wealthiest in the village. That she now took and spent the whole of it upon Jesus, was but a final expression of the fullness and the intensity of her devotion and her love.

Half hidden behind the Saviour's reclining form, she might have remained unnoticed, but the fragrant odor rose and filled the house, and drew attention to her deed. Cold and searching and jealous eyes are upon her, chiefly those of one who never had any cordial love to Jesus, who never had truly sympathized with the homage rendered him, who held the bag, had got himself appointed keeper of the small

purse they had in common, who already had been tampering with the trust, and greedily filching from the narrow stores committed to his care. Love so ardent, consecration so entire, sacrifice so costly, as that of Mary, he could not appreciate. He disliked it, condemned it; it threw such a reproach by contrast upon his own feeling and conduct to Christ. And now to his envious, avaricious spirit it appears that he has got good ground for censure. He had been watching the movements of Mary, had seen her bring forth the phial, had measured its size, had gauged the quantity, estimated the quality, and calculated the value of its contents. And now he turns to his fellow-disciples, and whispers in their ears the invidious question, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Three hundred pence! equal to the hire of a laborer for a whole year, —a sum capable of relieving many a child of poverty, of bringing relief to many a house of want. Had Judas got the money into his own hands, instead of being all lavished on this act of outward attention, had it been thrown into the common stock, it would not have been upon the poor that it should have been spent.

He would have managed that no small part of the money should have had a very different direction given to it. But it serves his mean malicious object to suggest that such might have been its destination. And by his craft, which has a show in it of a wise and thoughtful benevolence, he draws more than one of his fellow-apostles along with him, so that not loud but deep, the murmuring runs round the table, and they say to one another, "To what purpose is this waste? this ointment might have been sold for so much, and given to the poor."

Mary hears the murmuring, sees the eyes of one and another turned askance and condemningly upon her, shrinks under the detracting criticism of the Lord's own apostles, begins to wonder whether she may not have done something wrong, been guilty of a piece of extravagance which even Jesus may perhaps condemn. It had been hard for her before to bear the reproach of her bustling sister, but harder a thousand times to bear the reproach of the twelve. But neither then nor now did she make any answer, offer any defence of herself. She did not need. She had one to do that office for her far better than she could

have done it for herself. Jesus is there to throw the mantle of his protection over her, to explain and vindicate her deed. "Let her alone," he said, "why trouble ye the woman? she hath wrought a good work upon me." He might have singled out the first adverse criticiser of Mary's act, the suggester and propagator of the censorious judgment that was making its round of the table. Then and there he might have exposed the hollowness, the hypocrisy of the pretence about *his* caring for the poor, upon which the condemnation of Mary was based. And doing so, he might have made the others blush that they had given such ready ear to a speech that such a mean and malignant spirit had first broached. He did not do this, at least he said nothing that had any peculiar and exclusive reference to Judas. But there must have been something in our Lord's manner,—a look perhaps, such as he bent afterwards on Peter in the judgment-hall,—that let Judas know that before Jesus he stood a detected thief and hypocrite. And it was not to weep bitterly that he went forth from that supper, but with a spirit so galled and fretted that he took the earliest opportunity that occurred to him to commune

with the chief priests and the Temple guard as to how he might betray his Master, and deliver him into their hands.

Losing sight of him, let us return to Christ's defence of Mary. "She hath done a good work," he said, 'a noble work, one not only far from censure, but worthy of all praise. She hath done it unto *me*, done it out of pure deep love—a love that will bring the best, the costliest thing she has, and think it no waste, but rather its fittest, worthiest application, to bestow it upon me.' Upon that ground alone, upon his individual claims as compared with all others, Jesus might well have rested his vindication of Mary's act. Nay, might he not have taken the censure of her as a disparagement of himself? All these his general claims,—which go to warrant the highest, costliest, most self-sacrificing services that an enthusiastic piety can render,—he in this instance is content to waive, fixing upon the peculiarity of his existing position and the specialty of the particular service that she has rendered, as supplying of themselves an ample justification of the deed that had been condemned. The claims of the poor had been set up, as if they stood opposed to any such expenditure of prop-

erty as that made by Mary in this anointing of the Saviour. It was open to Christ to say that it was an altogether needless, false, injurious conflict thus sought to be stirred up,—as if to give to him, to do anything for him, were to take so much from the poor ; as if no portion of the great fund of the Church's wealth was available for any purely devout and religious purpose till all the wants of all the poor were met and satisfied—the wants, be it remembered, of such a kind that though we supplied them all to-day, would emerge in some new form to-morrow—wants which it is impossible so to deal with as wholly and permanently to relieve. He is no enlightened pleader for the poor who would represent them and their necessities as standing in the way of the indulgence of those warm impulses of love to Christ, out of which princely benefactions, as well as many a deed of heroic self-sacrifice, have emanated. The spirit of Judas, indeed—cold, calculating, carping, disparaging,—has often crept even into the Christian society, and men bearing the name of Jesus have often been ready, when great donations on behalf of some strictly religious enterprise were spoken of, to condemn them off-hand on this one ground, that it would have

been much better had the money been bestowed upon the poor. Just as when a large estate was sold in this country, the proprietor, seized with a favorite idea, having resolved to devote the entire proceeds of the sale to Christian missions in India, there were not wanting those who said—I quote now the words of one of them—“What a mad scheme this of Haldane’s! How many poor people might that money have fed and clothed?” The world, let us bless God for it, is not so poor that there is but one way—that, namely, of almsgiving—for gratifying those generous impulses which visit the heart and impel to acts of singular liberality. He who put it into the heart of Mary to do what she did towards the person of Christ, has put it into the hearts of others since to do like things towards his cause. And if in many such like instances there be more of mere emotion, more of the indulgence of individual taste than of staid and wise-hearted Christian benevolence, let us not join with the condemners of them, unless we be prepared to put a check upon all the free, spontaneous expressions of those sentiments of veneration, gratitude, and love to Jesus Christ, out of which some of the most chivalrous and heroic

deeds have sprung by which the history of our race has been adorned.

It is, however, as has been already said, upon somewhat narrower ground that Christ vindicates the act of Mary. It was one of such personal attention to him as could be shown to him only while he was present in the flesh. "The poor," said he, "ye have with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but me ye have not always." Further still, it was one that but once only in all his earthly life could be shown to Jesus, for "in that she hath poured this ointment on me, she is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burial." Had Mary any definite idea that she was doing beforehand what Joseph and Nicodemus would have no time and opportunity for doing, what the two other Marys would go out to do to find only that the need for its being done was over and gone? It may be assuming too much for her to believe that with a clearer insight and a simpler faith in what Jesus had said than had been yet reached by any of the twelve, she anticipated the death and burial of her Master was near at hand. But neither can we think that she acted without some vague presentiment that she was seizing upon a last

opportunity, that the days of such intercourse with Jesus were drawing to an end. She knew the perils to which he would be exposed whenever he entered Jerusalem. She had heard him speak of his approaching sufferings and death. To others the words might appear to be without meaning, or only to be allegorically interpreted but the quick instinct of her deeper love had refused to regard them so, and they had filled her bosom with an indefinite dread. The nearer the time for losing, the more intense became the clinging to him. Had she believed as the others around her did, had she looked forward to a speedy triumph of Jesus over all his enemies, and to the visible erection of his kingdom, would she have chosen the time she did for the anointing? would she not have reserved to a more fitting opportunity a service that was more appropriate to the crowning of a new monarch than the preparing of a living body for the tomb? In speaking as he did, Jesus may have been only attributing to Mary a fuller understanding of and simpler faith in his own prophetic utterances than that possessed at the time by any of his disciples. Such a conception of her state of mind and heart would elevate Mary to a still higher pinnacle than that ordi-

narily assigned to her, and we can see no good reason for doubting that it was even so.

But it does not require that we should assign to her any such pre-eminence of faith. It was the intensity of the personal attachment to Jesus that her act expressed which drew down upon it the encomium of the Lord. Thus he had to say of it what he could say of so few single services of any of his followers—that in it she did what she could, did all she could—in that direction there was not a step further that she could have taken. Of all like ways and forms of expressing attachment there was not a higher one that she could have chosen. Her whole heart of love went out in the act, and therefore Jesus said of it. “Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her,”—the one and only case in which Jesus ever spoke of the after earthly fame of any service rendered to him, predicting for it such a wide-spread reputation and such an undying remembrance. Thus said Chrysostom, when discoursing upon this incident, “While the victories of many kings and generals are lost in silence, and many who

have founded states and reduced nations to subjection, are not known by reputation or by name, the pouring of ointment by this woman is celebrated throughout the whole world. Time hath passed away, but the memory of the deed she did hath not waned away. But Persians and Indians and Scythians and Thracians, and the race of the Mauritians, and they who inhabit the British Isles, publish abroad an act which was done in Judea privately in a house by a woman." Fourteen hundred years have passed and gone since, in the great church of St. Sophia at Constantinople, Chrysostom uttered these words, referring to these British Isles as one of the remotest places of the then known world. The centuries that have rolled by since then have witnessed many a revolution, not the least wonderful among them the place that these British Isles now occupy, but still wider and wider is the tale of Mary's anointing of her Master being told, the fragrance of the ointment spreading, yet losing nothing of its sweetness, such fresh vitality, such self-preserving power, lodged in a simple act of pure and fervid love.

One single parting glance let us cast upon our Saviour as he presents himself to our eye

upon this occasion. He sits at a festive board. He is surrounded by men looking joyously forward to days and years of success and triumph. But he knows what they do not—that on that day week his body will be lying in the new-made sepulchre. And he accepts the anointing at Mary's hand as preparing his body for the burial. He sits the invited guest of a man who had been a leper, surrounded in that village home by a few humble followers. With serene eye he looks down into the future, and abroad over the earth, and speaks of it as a thing of certainty that this gospel—the gospel of glad tidings of salvation in his name—was to be preached throughout the whole world. If it be true that Jesus thought and felt and spoke and acted as the Evangelists represent him as having done that night, I do not need to say how vain the attempt to explain away his foresight of the future, to reduce it to the dimensions of the highest human wisdom sagaciously anticipating what was afterwards to occur.

THE END.

THE

PASSION WEEK.

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THE PASSION WEEK.

I.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM—JESUS
WEEPING OVER THE CITY.*

Sunday.

THE road from Jericho to Jerusalem, as it winds up the eastern slopes of Olivet, passes close by the village of Bethany. From the village a footpath runs up to the top of the Mount, and thence down a steep declivity into the ravine of the Kedron. This being the shortest, may have been the path ordinarily taken by the villagers when going on foot to and from Jerusalem. It was not the way that any rider, not the way that the caravans of-

* Matt. xxi. 1-11 ; Mark xi. 1-11 ; Luke xix. 29-44 ; John xii. 12-18.

Passover pilgrims coming up from Jericho. would choose. They naturally would take the somewhat longer, but much better and more level road, which runs round the southern shoulder of the ridge as it shelves down toward the Mount of Offence. The single circumstance that, on the occasion now before us, Jesus rode into the city, might of itself have led us to believe that it was by the latter road he went. Still further confirmation of this meets us as we enter into the details of the short but ever memorable procession.

The quiet day of Sabbatic rest at Bethany is over. Released from its restraints, visitors may now freely pass from Jerusalem to Bethany. Of this freedom numbers avail themselves, and the village is crowded. It is understood that at some time in the course of the day—the first day of the week—Jesus means to go into the city. During the forenoon the tidings of this intention are widely circulated. It was now but four days to the Passover, and the crowds of pilgrims, requiring as they did a day or two of preparation, have nearly all arrived. In and about Jerusalem between two and three millions of people—more than a third of the entire population of Judæa and Galilee—are

assembled.* The town itself is unable to afford accommodation to all the strangers. The environs all around are studded with booths and tents. The side of Olivet that looks toward the city, not the least favorite suburb, along which the road from Jericho descends, is covered with these temporary erections. In the afternoon Jesus leaves the village and joins the companies coming up from the valley of the Jordan. The road winds southward for a short distance out upon a ledge of the mountain, from the top of which is caught a distant view of a part of Mount Zion lying outside the walls, the great city itself being concealed. At this point, immediately before and beneath the traveller, there is a deep hollow running up into and dying out upon the hill-side, to avoid descending into which the road takes first a sudden bend to the right, till it reaches nearly to the top of the ravine, and then turns again to the left, to traverse the opposite spur of the mountain. Pausing for a moment at this spot, Jesus sees 'over against' him, across the hol-

* Josephus estimates the numbers present on a Passover occasion at about three millions, little short of half the population of the two provinces. The number of lambs slain is stated to have been 256,500.

low, the village of Bethphage.* Calling two of his disciples he bids them go by the short cut across the valley over to the village, and bring an ass and a colt that they would find there, and to have them ready upon the road running near to Bethphage by the time that he and the rest of the disciples have made the round by the head of the hollow.† The disciples listen with wonder to these instructions. It is but a short distance into the town—an hour's walk, or less ; it cannot be through weariness that Jesus wishes to have an ass to ride upon. He had seldom if ever before used this mode of travelling, one not having any special dignity in our eyes, but one that highest dignitaries in the East, kings and princes, prophets and priests, might not unsuitably, upon the

* The description of the text is derived from a minute personal examination of the localities. Upon the spot where in that description the village of Bethphage is represented as standing, tanks and foundations were perceived, the undoubted evidences of the former existence of a village. The site is the same, I presume, as the one assigned to the village by Dr. Barclay in the *City of the Great King*. It fully and minutely answers, as I have endeavored to indicate, all the requirements of the narrative.

† As usual, the narrative of St. Mark is characterized by the mention of minute particulars, such as the finding of the colt 'by the door without, in a place where two ways met.' St. Mark may have received his information from St. Peter, who may have been one of the two sent across the valley by Christ.

most important occasions, make use of. Can it be that the hour so long waited for has come? Can it be that Jesus is about to throw off his disguise, assume his regal rank and character, and enter the capital as the King of the Jews? As they move on, groups of pilgrims coming out from Jerusalem meet them by the way. To them they tell the orders Christ has given—tell the hopes that are rising in their hearts. The excitement spreads and deepens. They meet the asses by the way. It is the colt, the one upon which no man yet had sat, that Jesus chooses. They cast their garments on it, and set him thereon. They hail him as their Messiah, their King. He does now what he never did before: he accepts the title, he receives the homage. All is true, then, that they had been thinking and hoping. It is openly and avowedly as Christ their King that he is about to go into Jerusalem.

Then let all the honors that they can give him be bestowed. It is but little of outward pomp or splendor they can throw around this regal procession. They cannot turn the narrow mountain-path into a broad and covered roadway for their King, but they can strip off their outer garments, and cast them as a car-

pet beneath his feet. They can cut down leafy branches from the olive-trees and strew them in his way. Royal standards they have none to carry, they have no emblazoned flags of victory to wave. No choice instruments of music are here, through which practiced lips may pour the swelling notes of joy and triumph, but they can pluck the palm-tree branches (Nature's own emblems of victory) and wave them over his head, and they can raise their voices in hosannas round him. He allows all this, receives it all as seemly and due. The spirit of exultation and of triumph expands under the liberty and sanction thus given. Swelling in numbers, freer and more animated in its expressions, the procession moves on till the ridge of the hill is gained, and the city begins to open to the view. The mighty multitude breaks out into acclamations of praise ; those going before and those following after vie with one another, and fill the air with their hosannas,—applying to Jesus, and this entry into Jerusalem, passages that all understood to relate to the Messiah. ‘Hosanna to the Son of David ; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ; hosanna in the highest, blessed be the King, and blessed be the kingdom of our father Da-

vid ; peace in heaven and glory in the highest.' Some Pharisees who are looking on and listening, press through the crowd, and speaking to Jesus as one who must know and feel how misplaced and how perilous his public acceptance of such homage as this must be, would have him stop it. 'Master,' they say to him, 'rebuke thy disciples.' 'I tell you,' is his reply, 'that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.'

Down the sloping path the procession moves. A ledge of rock is reached, looking from which across the valley of the Kedron the whole city lies spread out before the Saviour's eye.* The sight arrests him ; the procession stops. All around is light and joy and triumph. But a dark shadow falls upon the Saviour's countenance. His eyes fill with tears. He beholds the city, and he weeps over it. Another Jerusalem than the one sitting there at ease, clothed in holiday attire, busied with her Passover preparations, is before his eye,—a Jerusalem beset, beleaguered, crouching in fear and terror, doomed to a terrible destruction. How little power has the present over the mind and heart

* See Dr. Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 191.

of Jesus ! What cares he for this adulation of the multitude, this parade of praise ? Even had it all been genuine, all the outburst of an intelligent faith, an enthusiastic attachment to him in his true character and office, it had not checked the current of thought and feeling within the Saviour's heart. But he knows how hollow it all is, how soon it will all die away. He thinks of the future ; but of what future ? Why was it not the future of the next few days ? Why did the scenes that were then before him not call up that future ? There before him lay the garden of Gethsemane : there, across the valley, outside the city walls, the hill of Calvary ; there, in the midst of the lofty buildings that crowned the heights of Zion and Moriah, rose the dwellings of the high priest and the palace of Herod ; and he who is now looking upon these places knows well that before another Sabbath dawns he would be lying in agony in that garden, that beneath these roofs he would be jeered at and spit upon, and mock emblems of royalty forced upon him—the sentence of condemnation ratified by the fiendish cries of the city multitude : ‘ Away, away with him ! crucify, crucify him ! ’ and that there, upon the hill of Calvary, he would have to die the

death of the cross. It had been no disparagement to the humanity of Jesus had the sights then before his eyes brought up before his thoughts the sufferings and the death with which so soon they were to be associated. But there is a higher reach of self-forgetfulness here than that of deadness or indifference to the acclamation of the surrounding multitudes. Jesus puts aside the prospect of his own endurance, though so near and so dark. He looks over and beyond them. Without naming the city, yet, by some glance of the eye or motion of the hand making clear the reference of his words as he stands weeping, he exclaims! 'If *thou* hadst known, even *thou*,' thou upon whom for so many ages so much of the divine goodness has been lavished, whose gates the Lord has loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob, within whose holy Temple for so many generations the smoking altar and the bleeding sacrifice without, and the glimmering light of the Shekinah within, have spoken of a God there waiting to be gracious,—if thou, even thou, with all thy crowded sins upon thee, thy stoning of the prophets and casting forth of those that were sent to thee,—if thou at least, at last, in this thy day, when, all his other messengers

rejected, the Father has sent forth his own Son to thee, saying, Surely they will reverence my Son,—if thou in thy day hadst known the things belonging to thy peace spoken so often, so earnestly by him.’

‘If thou hadst but known.’ The sentence is cut short. For a moment the bright vision rises of all that Jerusalem might have been had she but known the time of her visitation. Had she but owned and welcomed her Messiah when he came, then might she have sat as a queen among all the cities of the earth. And he whom she honored would have honored her so as to cast all her former glory into the shade. Then, without her hands being steeped in the wickedness of the deed, or any hands of wickedness being employed to do it, some fit altar might have been found or reared, and in sight not of mocking enemies, but adoring friends, might the great sacrifice have been offered up; and from Jerusalem, as from the centre of the great Christian commonwealth, might the tidings of the completed redemption have gone forth, and unto her all the glory and the honor of the nations might have been brought. All this, and more, might have been in that bright vision which for a moment rises before the Sa-

viour's eye. But quickly the vision dissipates : gives place to one, alas ! how different. ' But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days will come that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'

The pause, the tears, the lament over the doomed city, must have produced a deep impression on those around. How little could they understand the meaning of what Christ said, or the source of the emotion he displayed. One thing was clearly shown : the absence of all anticipation on the part of Jesus of any present individual success and triumph. There was much in the manner of his reception, in the plaudits with which he was hailed, in the popular enthusiasm that had found for itself such a vent, to have impelled a mere political adventurer to take advantage of the occasion, and put himself at the head of a great national movement. How easy had it been for Jesus, had he gone in with the false ideas and expectations of the thousands then congregated in

and about Jerusalem, to have got himself recognized as their leader, and to have created a commotion which there were no means at hand to allay! His thoughts are far otherwise occupied. A sublime compassion fills his spirit, draws forth his tears, and prompts those pathetic lamentations.

We are not told what effect the strange interruption of the triumphal march produced. It must have done something to subdue the ardor, to quiet the demonstrations of the crowd. The procession, however, after the momentary pause, moves on; the hosannas abated, it may have been, but still continued. They go down into the valley, they cross the Kedron, they climb the heights on which the city stood, they enter into the nearest gate. The whole city is moved. The great bulk of the town population look askance upon this singular spectacle, far less acquainted with and less interested in Jesus than the strangers from the country.

‘Who is this?’ they say, as they see Jesus in the centre of the excited multitude; ‘and what can all this mean?’ They are told by those taking part in the procession: ‘This is Jesus the prophet, of Nazareth of Galilee.’ How they received the intelligence we do not

know; with something of wonder we may believe, and not a little of incredulity and dislike. The movement, however, is too deep and too extensive for any instant questioning of its character or interruption of its progress. The authorities, taken in all likelihood by surprise, do not interfere. Jesus goes up into the Temple, looks round upon all things that he saw there; and, the even-tide being now come,* he turns, retraces his steps, and retires, we know not how attended, to the quiet home at Bethany.

Upon the triumphal procession into the city, especially upon the tears which Jesus shed and the lamentation that he poured over Jerusalem, let us offer one or two remarks.

1. How clear the proof here given of our Lord's intimate foreknowledge of all that was afterwards to occur! Any one might have ventured on a prediction, grounding it upon what he knew of the existing relationships between the Roman power and the Jewish community, that a collision was imminent, that in that collision the weaker party would be conquered, and Jerusalem should fall; but who

* Mark xi. 11.

save he to whom the future was as the present could have spoken as Jesus did of the days when the enemy should cast a trench, and raise a mound, and compass it round, and keep it in on every side?

Josephus tells us how to the very letter all this was fulfilled,—how at an early stage of the four months' siege, Titus, the Roman general in command, summoned a council of war, at which three plans were discussed: to storm the city, or to repair and rebuild the engines that had been destroyed, or to blockade the city and starve it into surrender. The third was the method adopted, and by incredible labor, the whole army engaging in the work, a wall was raised, which compassed the city round and round, and hemmed it in on every side.

2. A fresh mysterious awe attaches to the tears of Jesus shed thus beforehand over Jerusalem, as we think that they were shed by him whose own hand inflicted the judgment over which he lamented. In this aspect these tears are typical, and have been rightly taken as representative and expressive of the emotion with which Christ contemplates the great spiritual catastrophe of the ruin of lost souls. It might have been otherwise than it was with

the doomed city. Had it been utterly impossible for her to have averted that calamity, had that impossibility been due, as it must have been had it existed, to Christ's own ordinance, there had been hypocrisy in his tears, in his weeping over the calamity as if it had been a curse drawn down by Jerusalem upon herself by her own acts and deeds. But the alternative had been set before the city; the things belonging to her peace had been revealed; she might have known them; it was her own fault she did not; had she known, the terrible fate had not befallen her. So it is with every lost spirit of our race. The things belonging to our peace with God have been made clearly known and openly set before us. They are ours in offer; if we will they may be ours in possession. There is no outward hindrance, no invincible obstacle whatever to our entering into that peace, nothing but our own unwillingness to be saved as Jesus desires to save us. If any of us perish, over us the Saviour shall weep as over those who have been the instruments of their own ruin.

How impressively too are we here taught that the day of grace, the opportunity of return to and reconciliation with God, has its fixed

limits, narrower often than the day of life. Apparently Jerusalem's day of grace extended for years beyond the time when he uttered the words of doom, and let fall the tears of sympathy. Miracles were wrought in her streets, exhortations and remonstrances addressed to her children, but to that all seeing-eye before which the secret things of God's spiritual kingdom lie open, the things belonging to her peace were from that time hid from her eyes. The door was shut, the doom was sealed. A like event happened of old to Esau when he sold his birthright. That was the point of doom in his career, and having passed it he found no place for repentance, for changing the divine purpose regarding him, though he sought it carefully with tears. A like event happened to ancient Israel on her exodus from Egypt. The time of trial as to whether an entrance should be ministered into the land of promise closed at her first approach to the borders of Palestine ; closed when the Lord swore in his wrath that she should not enter into that rest. A like event may happen in the moral and spiritual history of any man. God's Spirit will not always strive with ours. The time may come when the awful words pass from the lips

of the righteous Judge, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;"—and providence will let the man alone; and the Word of God will let the man alone; and his own conscience will let the man alone; and the Spirit of all grace will let the man alone. It is not for us to usurp the prerogative of the Omniscient. It is not for us to affirm of any one, let his character and conduct be what it may, that he has reached or passed the mysterious point beyond which that comes true. It is not for any one to pass such sentence upon himself. But let all of us stand upon our guard, and reflect that if for months or years we have been growing colder, deader, more indifferent to spiritual things, to the unseen and eternal realities; if conscience has been gradually losing her hold and weakening in her power; if we can listen now unmoved to what once would have impressed and affected us; if we court and dally with temptations that once we would have shunned; if sins are lightly committed which once we would have shrunk from; by these, and such like marks, it is apparent that our day of grace has been declining, the shadows of its evening have been lengthening out, and

that, if no change occur, if this course of things go on long, ere the sun of our natural existence go down, the sun of our spiritual day may have set, never to rise again.

II.

THE FIG-TREE WITHERING AWAY—THE SECOND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.*

Monday.

SPEAKING generally of the days and nights of the memorable week which preceded his crucifixion, St. Luke tells us that Jesus 'in the daytime was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives.'† The other evangelists speak of his going out at even-tide to Bethany, to lodge there. Some of the nights may have been spent in the village home; some outside in the olive-gardens. If the night which succeeded his triumphal entry into the

* Matt. xxi. 12-17; Mark xi. 12-19; Luke xix. 45-48; John xii. 19.

† Luke xxi. 37.

city was spent in the latter way, it may have been in solitude, in sleeplessness, in fasting, and in prayer, that its silent watches passed. And this would explain to us the circumstance, otherwise obscure, that next morning as he returned into the city Jesus was hungry. In this condition, he saw at some distance before him by the wayside, a fig-tree covered with leaves. It is the peculiar nature of this tree that ordinarily its fruit appears before its leaves. Showing, as it did, such profusion of leaf, the fig-tree on which the eye of Jesus rested should have had some fruit hanging on its branches. But when he came up to it, it had none. Was Christ then deceived and disappointed? Did he not know before he approached the tree that no fruit would be found upon it? If he did know, should he have appeared to cherish an expectation which he did not really entertain? In answer to these and many kindred questions which may be raised regarding the incident, it is enough to say that in his whole dealing with the fig-tree by the wayside, Jesus meant, not to speak, but to enact a parable. In such-acting, the letter may, and in many instances must, be false, that the spirit and meaning may be truly and fully exhibited.

Here is a tree which by its show of leaves gives promise that it has fruit upon it. Nay, more, here is a tree which steps out in advance of all its fellows,—for the time of figs, the ordinary season for that fruit ripening in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, has not yet come ; here is a tree which, by the very prematureness and advanced condition of its foliage, tempts the traveller to believe that he will find there the first figs of the season. It is as an ordinary traveller that Jesus approaches it, and when he finds that it has by its barrenness not only sinned against the laws of its species, and failed to profit by the advantages it has enjoyed, but in its early foliage made such a boastful and deceitful show of precedence and superiority above its neighbors, he seizes upon it as one of the fittest emblems he can find of that land and people so highly favored, for which the Great Husbandman had done so much, which had set itself out before all other lands and peoples, and made so large yet so deceitful a profession of allegiance to the Most High. In his treatment of this tree, Jesus would symbolize and shadow forth the doom that the making and the falsifying of these professions has drawn down upon Israel. It was in mercy that in

dumb prophetic show he chose to represent this doom in a calamity visited upon a senseless tree rather than upon a human agent. He might have taken one or more of the men of whom this tree was but a type, and in some terrible catastrophe inflicted upon them have prefigured the fate of their countrymen. Or he might, as he had done not long before, when pointing to the heavy judgments impending over Judea, have taken actual instances of human suffering, such as that of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, or of the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and employed them as emblems of the like destruction in reserve for the impenitent. Upon the very occasion now alluded to, when the first hint or obscure prophecy was given of the kind of ruin coming upon Judea, he had spoken a parable in which he had used a fig-tree as an emblem of Israel,—a fruitless fig-tree, for which a period of respite had been solicited and obtained, for which year after year everything had been done, by digging about it and dunging it, that skill and care could suggest. That parable, however, had stopped at a very critical point. The intercession had prevailed. The barren fig-tree was to be allowed

to stand, another year of trial was to be given to it.

We may assume that all which the dresser of the vineyard promised would be done ; but the issue is not revealed. The curtain drops as the fourth year begins. What happened at its close is left uncertain. After all this care and culture the barren fig-tree might remain barren still, and the sentence, "Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground?" come to be executed upon it. Whether it was actually to be so or not, the parable did not reveal. But now this actual fig-tree of the wayside, found so full of leaf though so empty of fruit, is taken, even as the fig-tree of the parable, to represent impenitent Israel, and in his treatment of it Jesus takes up, carries on, and completes the parable, telling what it left untold. Looking at Christ's act and deed in this light, as at once symbolic and prophetic, as stretching in its significance beyond ancient Israel, and embracing an exhibition of the result of profession without practice, show without substance in religion, let us ask ourselves upon what ground was it that our Lord's cursing of the tree was grounded, and in what did that curse consist ?

The tree is condemned solely for its barren-

ness. It is not said of it that it showed a sickly, dwarfed, or stunted growth. It may have stood as fair and goodly a tree to look upon as any fig-tree around Jerusalem, offering as inviting an object to the traveller's eye, furnishing in outspread branches and broad green leaves as refreshing a shade. But whatever its other qualities, either for use or for ornament, it wanted this one,—it did not bear fruit. That was its fatal defect, and for that one defect the blighting words were spoken against it, and it died. The tree had failed in its first and highest office. A fig-tree is created that it may bear figs. That is its peculiar function in the physical creation, and if it fail in performing this function, it forfeits its place in that creation, it incurs the penalty of removal, it may righteously be treated as a cumberer of the earth. We men have been created that, by being, doing, enduring what God requires us to be and to do and to endure, we may bear some fruit unto him, some fruit of that kind which can be laid up in the eternal garner. That is our allotted function in the spiritual creation, and if it remain undischarged, then by us also is our place in that creation forfeited. In our natural barrenness and unfruitfulness towards

God a gracious Intercessor has been found ; by him for us a period of respite has been obtained, a period in which many a gracious ministry of his providence and Spirit is operating upon us. Long and sadly may we have failed in fulfilling the great end of our creation, yet if we will but yield ourselves to these kindly and gracious influences that the Redeemer of our souls is so ready to exert, the place that we had forfeited may still be ours, seasons of richer fruitfulness may be before us on earth, and a long summer-tide of endless joy beyond. But if we fail, if we resist these influences, if we still remain barren before God, it will avail us little that we plead the harmlessness of our lives, the gentleness, the goodness, the generosity of our dispositions and conduct toward our fellow-men. Like the barren fig-tree of the wayside we stand, with much, it may be, of beauty, much of outward show, many an amiable quality in us to win human love, not without use either, contributing largely to the happiness of others, but barren towards God, fruitless in the eye of Christ, open to the doom that we may force him to pronounce and execute.

And what is that doom, as shadowed forth in the symbolic incident that we have now be-

fore us? Jesus does nothing to the barren fig-tree. No outward ministry of wrath is here employed ; no axe is laid at the root of the tree ; no whirlwind blast from the wilderness strips it of its leaves ; no lightning-stroke from heaven is commissioned to split its solid trunk, and scorch and wither up its fruitless branches. The doom pronounced is simply this : ‘ Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.’ The curse laid upon it was that of perpetual barrenness. For the execution of that curse it was not necessary that any kind of violence should be done to it ; but it was physically necessary that all those material agencies needed to make it a fruit-bearing tree, which had so long and so unavailingly been operating, should now cease to act. This actually takes place. The sentence passes from the lips of Jesus : ‘ Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever.’ His ministering servants hear and hasten to carry the sentence into execution. The earth hears and yields no more nourishment to those roots ; light and air, they hear and withhold from them their genial influences ; the rain may fall, the dew may settle upon those branches, but not to recruit or re-invigorate. It had not profited by them as it should, and

now there is taken away from it even that which it had. Poor, solitary, forsaken tree, cut off by that fiat of Heaven from all the supports of life and growth ! See how from that moment the glossy green of the spring leaves grows dull ; the branches begin to droop ; the bark to crack ; the whole tree to shrink and shrivel up, till next morning the passers-by see it dried up from the very roots !

And should the great Creator desire to deal with any barren human spirit as he dealt with that barren fig-tree, what has he to do in order to punish it for its barrenness ? He does not need to come forth out of his place to avenge the injury done to his great name. He does not need to grasp any instrument of vengeance, or inflict with it a single stroke ; no bolt of wrath need be hurled from above, nor any hell from beneath be moved to draw the guilty spirit down into its eddying fires. No ; all that God has to do is simply to pass the same doom executed upon the fig-tree. He has but to desert that spirit, to say, ‘ Arise, let us go hence,’ and call away after him as he goes all those powers and influences that had been at work there so long and so fruitlessly, to leave it absolutely and wholly, finally and forever, to

itself. Poor, solitary, forsaken spirit, cut off from God, and cast adrift upon a wild and shoreless sea, with thine own vulture passions in thee, let loose from all restraint, to turn upon thee and torture thee, and prey upon thee forever ! What darker, drearier hell than that?—The soul breeding within it the worm that never dies ; itself kindling the fire it cannot quench.

The sentence against the fig-tree pronounced, the elements having got from their Creator the commission to execute it, which they were not slow to do, Jesus passes on into the city and up into the Temple. He had on the preceding evening merely looked around on all that was to be seen. It was the day (the tenth of the month Nisan) on which, according to the old command, the Jews were solemnly to set apart the paschal lamb for the coming sacrifice. And Christ's object may then have simply been to present himself as the true Lamb of God, set apart from the beginning, who four days thereafter was to offer up himself in the sacrifice of the cross. At the time of that short evening visit all may have been comparatively quiet within the Temple. But now, as at an early hour he enters the court of the Gentiles, the

same sights are before him that met his eyes and stirred his spirit three years before : the bustle of a great traffic, of buyers and sellers, and money-changers, all busily engaged. In reproof of such desecration, in assertion of his divine dignity and power as the Son coming to his Father's house, with full authority to dispose of all things there as he pleased, he had at the beginning of his ministry cleansed the Temple, cast out the traffickers, overturned the tables of the money-changers—with little or no effect as it would seem, for now all the abuses are restored. The hand of the cleanser is as much needed as ever, and it is once more put forth as vigorously, perhaps more so, than before, for we detect increase of sternness both in word and deed on this occasion. But why the repetition of the act? Why begin and close the ministry in Jerusalem with such cleansing of the Temple? Though we could give no other answer to such a question, we should be satisfied with regarding this as one of the many instances in which Jesus repeated himself as he did both in speech and in action. He knew the nature on which he desired to operate. He knew how difficult it is to fix even the simplest ideas, not connected with the outward world of

sense and action, in the minds and hearts of the great mass of mankind. He knew that however good the instruments might be that are used to do this (and he chose the simplest and the best,) to make the impression deep and lasting the stroke must be oft repeated; the same truth told in the same words, or illustrated by the same emblems, or symbolized by the same acts. In the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark more than a dozen instances occur of the same discourses re-delivered with scarcely any variation in the phraseology; and we may warrantably conclude that this happened far more frequently in the actual ministry of Jesus than now appears upon the face of the record. It was the same with the miracles as with the teachings of our Saviour. Twice he fed many thousands on the hill-side, and twice within the lake miraculous draughts of fishes were taken. It was in harmony with the method thus so often followed, that at the commencement and at the close of his labors in Judea, within the courts of the Temple, in presence of the priests and the rulers, he asserted by a bold and authoritative act his prophetic and Messianic character, his true and proper Sonship to the Father. In the latter

case we can see a peculiar propriety in his having done so. The day before, he had made his appeal to the people. In language borrowed from ancient prophecy, and known by all to apply to Christ their coming king, they had hailed him as their Messiah, and in his acceptance of their homage he had publicly appropriated to himself the Messianic office. It remained that he should make a like appeal to the priesthood, calling on them to recognize him as holding that high office. He did so the next day in the Temple. It was the first thing he did on entering the holy place. This was the way in which he began that brief ministry within its courts, in which his earthly labors were to close. He knew beforehand how fruitless it would be ; but nevertheless the sign and token of who it was that was amongst them must be given.

The second cleansing of the courts of the Temple appears to have taken the custodiers of the holy place as much by surprise as did the first. They made no attempt to interrupt it, nor did they interfere with Jesus, in the use to which he turned the courts that he had cleansed. For he did not retire after the purification was accomplished. He remained

to keep guard over the place from which the defilement had been removed, not suffering any man to carry even a common vessel across the court, which the Jews had turned into a common city thoroughfare. He remained for hours to occupy it unchallenged; the people flocked into it, and he taught them there. They were all, we are told, very attentive to hear him, and they were astonished at his doctrine—the citizens who had never heard him teach so before, and the Galileans, to whom, the doctrine, indeed, was not new, but who wondered afresh to hear it spoken under the shadow of the holy place. And the teaching had its usual accompaniment: “The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them” there.* He had wrought many miracles before in Jerusalem, but never here or never thus; never within the walls of the sanctuary; never in such a public and solemn manner, as direct attestations of his asserted kingly dignity and power. For hours he had the large outer court of the Gentiles at his command, and this was the manner in which the time and the place were employed. What a

* Matt xxi. 14.

change from the morning to the forenoon occupation—from the crowding and the jostling, and the bargaining, and the driving to and fro of cattle, to the silent multitude hanging upon the lips of the great Speaker, or watching as one and another of the lame and the blind is brought to him to be healed! But where all this while are the priests and the Levites, the rulers and the Temple guard? They are looking on bewildered, their earlier antipathy kindled into a tenfold fervor of hate. The closer to them he comes, the more distinctly and forcibly he presses upon them the evidences of his Messiahship, it convinces them the more what a dangerous man he is, how utterly impossible it is that he can be any longer tolerated or suffered to act in such a bold, presumptuous, defiant style—the resolution they had already formed to destroy him taking firmer hold of them than ever. For the moment, however, they fear both him and the people: his conduct in braving them within their own stronghold so unlike anything that they had ever fancied he would dare to do; the current of popular feeling running strongly in his fa-

* Mark xi. 18, Luke xix. 48.

vor. Not that there was much outward demonstration of this feeling. It had expended itself the day before in the triumphal procession without the city gates, where all felt more at liberty.

Within the area of the Temple, and under those searching, frowning looks of the scribes and the chief priests, the breath of the people is abated. Thinking of the strange tears and lamentations over the capital, of all they see and hear within the Temple, something of doubt and uncertainty, of awe and fear, has been stealing over the spirits of the ignorant multitude, which restrains them from any marked or vehement expressions of attachment. But there are little children among them who had taken part in yesterday's procession, within whose ears its hosannas are still ringing. These feel no such restraint, and in the joyous ardor of the hour and scene, they lift up their voices and fill the courts of the Temple with the cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' This is more than the chief priests and scribes can bear. In their displeasure they appeal to Christ himself, saying, 'Hearest thou what they say? wishing him, as their allies had done the day before, to stop praises, in their

ears so profane, so blasphemous. All the answer that they get is a sentence applicable to all praise that comes from the lips of childhood, cited from a psalm which is throughout a prophecy of himself, a proclamation of the excellency of his name and kingdom over all the earth : ‘ Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise ? ’ Pleasant ever to the eye of Jesus was childhood, with its charm of freshness, simplicity, buoyant freedom, and open, ardent love and trust, and sweet ever to his ear the strains of juvenile devotion, but never so pleasant as when he saw these bands of children clustering round him in the Temple ; never so sweet as when—no others left to do it—they lifted up their youthful voices in those hosannas, the last accents of earthly praise that fell upon his ear.

At the rebuke and the quotation, the baffled scribes and high priests retire, to do no more that day in the way of interruption ; retire to mature their plans, to wait for the morrow, and see what it will bring forth. So closed the last day but one of the active ministry of Jesus.

III.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE—PARABLES OF THE TWO SONS AND OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.*

Tuesday.

IT was early on the morning of Monday, the second day of the Passion week, that Jesus pronounced the doom upon the fig-tree. The sentence took immediate effect : ‘ Presently the fig-tree withered away.’† The withering, however, was not so instantaneous and complete as to attract at the moment the attention of the disciples, or the shades of evening may have wrapped the tree from their sight as they went out to the Mount of Olives. Next morning, however, returning into the city by the same path they had taken the day before, they came to the tree, looked at it, and saw that it was ‘ dried up from the roots.’‡ Jesus him-

* Mark xi. 20-33 ; xii. 1-12 ; Matt. xxi. 23-46 ; Luke xx. 1-13.

† Matt. xxi. 19.

‡ Mark xi. 20

self seems scarcely to notice it, is about to pass it by. The ready spokesman, Peter, calls his attention to it, and says 'Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away.' It is simple wonder, and nothing more, wonder at the power by which such an effect had been accomplished ; which breaks out in this expression of the apostle. And he is the faithful representative of the state of feeling in the breasts of his brethren. They manifest no curiosity, at least make no inquiry as to the spiritual meaning of the incident. Their thoughts are engrossed with the singularity of the occurrence, that by a simple word spoken, without any external agency employed, so large a tree, in full leaf, should, within twenty-four hours, have shrunk up from its very roots, and should now stand before them a leafless, shrivelled, lifeless thing. Had they been in a different frame of mind, had they been wondering, not how, but why so strange a thing was done, Jesus might have spoken to them otherwise than he did. As it was, he graciously accommodates himself to the existing condition of their thoughts, by letting them know that his word had been a word of power, because a word of strong undoubting

faith, such faith as they themselves might cherish. 'And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea ; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe ; it shall be done.' In the early days of Christianity, the faith of the apostles was authorized and encouraged to take hold of the omnipotence of the Deity, and through it to work miracles. This kind of faith, in its absolute and perfect form, existed only in our Lord himself. To the power itself by which the miracles were to be wrought there was absolutely no limit, as there was none to that omnipotence which the faith was to appropriate and employ. But in actual exercise the power was to be proportioned to the faith. It was to be according to their faith that it was to be done by them, as well as in them. We accept it then as true to its whole extent, that at that time, and as to these men, there was no miracle of power needful or useful for the furtherance of their apostolic work, which their faith, had it been perfect, might not have enabled them to accomplish. Of course we understand that that would not have

been a true or intelligent faith in God which desired simply to make trial of its strength, independently of the purpose for which the power was exercised. We put aside, therefore, as quite frivolous and out of place, such a question as this : Could St. Peter or St. Paul, when their faith was strongest, have cast a mountain into the sea, or plucked up a sycamore-tree by the roots

Whatever God saw was meet to be done, the power to do that was given ; and so to the very shadow of the one, and to part of the dress of the other, a wonderful efficacy was once attached. But they and all these early Christians were to know that the gift of working wonders, which sat for a season like a crown of glory upon the brow of the infant Church, was not to be idly and indiscriminately employed, and was ever to be reckoned as of inferior value in God's sight to those inward graces of the soul, in which true likeness to and fellowship with God consists. Thus it is that from speaking of faith as putting itself forth in the working of miracles, Jesus proceeds to speak of it as expressing the desires of the heart to God in prayer : "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire

when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any ; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." The last words are the same that he had used in the Sermon on the Mount. Comparing the two cases, however, there is something more striking in the parallel than the simple repetition of the same words. It was after his having spoken for the first time the prayer that goes by his name, that at the close—as if the one petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," had been dwelling upon his mind, and he desired to recur to it, in order to press home upon the heart the duty of forgiving others—that before passing on to another subject of his discourse, he said : For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* So is it here. He cannot speak of the large and limitless in-

* Matt. vi. 14, 15.

fluence of prayer without recurring to the same idea, expressing and enforcing it in the same words. Why have the two—our forgiving others, and being ourselves forgiven—been linked thus together in such close and singular conjunction? Not that there is any other ground of the divine forgiveness than the free mercy of our God in Christ; not that by pardoning others we purchase the pardon of the Heavens; but that the connexion between the two is so constant, fixed, invariable, that neither can you ever find the humble, broken, contrite heart, which sues for mercy at the throne of grace, without finding there also the meek and gentle spirit that goes forth forgivingly towards others; nor do you ever meet with such free, full, generous forgiveness of others, as from those who have themselves partaken of the pardoning grace of God. He who has been forgiven that great debt, the ten thousand talents, how can he refuse to forgive the hundred pence?

The words about forgiveness were spoken in presence of the withered fig-tree. The same mysterious power, which had in this one instance been put forth to blast and to destroy, was to be conveyed to the disciples. May it not in part

have been to warn them that it was in no wrathful spirit, for no malignant or destructive purposes, that it was to be wielded by them,—that in such emphatic terms they were reminded that it must ever be in a meek forgiving spirit that they should sue for the aids of the heavenly power?

The short conversation by the wayside over the walk into the city is resumed, and the Temple courts are reached, already filled, though it was yet early, with eager expectant crowds. Before beginning his work of teaching and of healing, Jesus is walking leisurely through the courts, calmly surveying all around, looking, perhaps, to see what effect his act of the preceding day has had in the way of removing the profanations of the place.

The Sanhedrim has met, a consultation has been held, it has been resolved that as a preliminary step he shall be challenged, and forced to produce and authenticate his credentials.

‘As he was walking in the Temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders,’—the three great bodies out of whom the highest council of the Jews was constituted. It is a formal deputation, in all likelihood, from this council, which now approaches and accosts

him. Their question seems a fit and fair one. They are the constituted keepers of the Temple, of the only public building of the city that the Romans have left entirely under Jewish control. There has been a manifest invasion of the territory committed to their guardianship, of the offices that they alone are held competent to discharge ; for who is this that, being neither priest nor Levite, nor scribe nor elder, deals with the sacred place as if it were his own? Nothing at first sight more proper or pertinent than that they should come to one acting in such a way as Jesus had done the day before, and say to him, 'By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?' We remember, however, that three years before Jesus had acted in the same way within the precincts of the Temple, and that the same men had then accosted him in the same manner. Their question then indeed had been somewhat different from what it is now : 'What sign showest thou, seeing thou doest these things?' Since then, sign after sign had been given, miracle after miracle had been wrought, proof after proof of his Messiahship had been presented. They had refused to listen and be convinced ; had turned all the multiplied evi-

dence aside, and dealt with it as if it were of no weight. And now, at the close of a period teeming throughout with answers to their first challenge, they address him as if, for the first time, the question as to what and who he was, had to be raised. They do not, indeed, now ask for signs ; they must have other vouchers. They must probe to the bottom the pretensions of this bold invader of their Temple, and draw out from him what they fondly hope will give them sufficient ground legally to condemn. They frame their queries well. They first ask about the authority under which he acts. They know that no authority but one, that of God himself, could sanction the procedure of the Galilean. He may plead that authority ; but his own bare claiming it will not suffice,—he must display his title to the possession of this authority, must tell who gave it him. Looking at the motives by which they were actuated, and the sinister objects they had in view—considering, too, how full and varied were the materials already in their hands for answering their inquiry,—Jesus might have kept silence and refused to answer. He does not do this : he gives indeed no direct or categorical reply ; but it would be wrong to say that he cleverly

or artfully evades the question they put to him by asking them another upon a quite different subject ; that he suspends his reply to them on theirs to his, so that, out of their refusal to answer, he may construct a defence of his own silence.

It was not as a mere evasion of a captious challenge, as a mere method of stopping the mouths of the challengers, that 'Jesus answered and said unto them, I will ask you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things : The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? answer me.' Jesus refers to the baptism of John as containing within itself a sufficient reply to their inquiries. If they acknowledged it as divine, they must also recognize his authority as divine ; for John had openly and repeatedly pointed to him as the Messiah, the greater than he, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose. First, then, he must have from them a confession as to the true character of the Baptist's ministry. This they are unprepared to give. Though really and in their hearts rejecting it, they had never openly discredited John's claim to be a prophet sent by God. They had managed to keep the people

in ignorance of what they thought. They had not needed to interfere to check the career of the Baptist. Herod had done their work for them in this case. John had been removed, and they were willing enough it should be thought that they participated in the popular belief. They felt at once the difficulty of the dilemma in which the question of Jesus involved them. Should they say, as was naturally to be expected they should, that John's baptism was from heaven, Jesus would have it in his power to say, 'Why then did ye not believe him when he testified of me? If he was from heaven then so am I, my ministry and his being so wrapped together, that together they stand or together they fall.' Such was the instant use to which Jesus could turn a present acknowledgment on their part of the divine origin and authority of the Baptist's ministry, convicting them at once of the plainest and grossest inconsistency. They were not prepared to stand convicted of this in presence of the people, now stirred to intense anxiety as they watched the progress of this collision. But as little were they prepared to face the storm that they would raise by an open denial of the heavenly origin of the Baptist's mission ;

and so to Christ's pointed interrogation, their only answer, after reasoning among themselves, is, 'We cannot tell.' It was false; they could at least have told what they themselves believed. They could, but dared not; and so by this piece of cowardice and hypocrisy they forfeit the title to have any other or fuller satisfaction given them as to the nature and origin of that authority which Jesus exercised, beyond that which was already in their hands. 'And Jesus answering said unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.'*

Scarcely prepared for having the tables turned so quickly and thoroughly upon them, the scribes and chief priests and elders stand crest-fallen before the Lord. He has them now in hand, nor will he lose the last opportunity of telling them what they are, and what he knows they have resolved to do. About to pronounce over them his fearful anathemas, when all the word-battles of this troubled day are over, he will force them now beforehand to spread out with their own hands the grounds upon which those anathemas were to rest. Out of their own mouths will he condemn them. This is

* Mark xi. 33.

done by a skillful use of parable ; the same kind of use that Nathan made of it when he got David to judge and condemn his own conduct. 'But what think ye?' says Jesus to them, as if he were introducing a wholly new topic : 'A certain man had two sons ; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not ; but afterward he repented, and went. He came to the second, and said likewise ; and he answered and said, I go, sir ; but went not. Which of these two did the will of his father ?' Little suspecting the real drift of this short and simple story, and rather relieved than otherwise by the question, as getting them out of their embarrassment and covering their fall, they say unto him at once, 'The first ; the one who said he would not, yet who went.' Then came the moral and application of the tale ; 'Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not ; but the publicans and the harlots believed him ; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.' It was the treatment given to John and to his ministry that

Jesus had been setting forth in the conduct of the two sons to their father. They, the chief priests and elders of the people, were the second son; and those publicans and harlots, who repented at the preaching of the Baptist, were the first. It was bad enough to have the veil of hypocrisy behind which they had tried to screen themselves torn aside; to have their unbelief in the Baptist proclaimed upon the house-tops. It was worse to have publicans and harlots preferred before them, the preference grounded upon their own verdict. But they have still more to hear, still more to bear. Jesus had been comparing them, to their great chagrin, with some of the lowest of their own times. His eye now takes a wider range. He looks back to the treatment which these men's forefathers had given to messenger after messenger of the Most High, and he looks forward to that which they, fit sons of such sires, were about to give himself; and bringing the past, the present, and the future into the picture, he tells of a vineyard well fenced, well furnished, let out to husbandmen; of servant after servant sent to receive its fruits; of one of them being beaten, another stoned, another killed, till the owner of the vineyard having 'one son, his

well beloved,' at last sends him, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But the wicked husbandmen, when he comes, take and kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What then,' says Jesus, 'shall the lord of the vineyard, when he cometh, do unto those husbandmen?' This question is addressed to the people, and not to the chief priests and scribes, to whom, as St. Luke* tells us, the parable was spoken; and they, not looking perhaps beyond the simple incidents of the tale, say, 'He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others.' But why are the chief priests and the elders forced, as unwillingly they are, to remain standing there in Christ's presence with a great crowd around them? what are they thinking of this second story? what will they now say? Scarcely has Christ begun to speak of the vineyard and its fence, and its wine-press, ere Isaiah's vineyard—type, they knew, of the house of Israel—recurs to their memory; and as messenger after messenger is spoken of as despatched, what could those be but the prophets whom the Lord had sent unto their forefathers? Al-

* Luke xx. 9.

ready a strong suspicion that this tale also is to be brought to bear against them has entered into their minds—a suspicion that is turned into a certainty as Christ proceeds to speak of the owner of the vineyard as a father having an only and well-beloved son, just such a son as Jesus had always claimed to be to God, and as he went on to represent the seizure and the death of that son,—the very deed that they already had resolved to do. In these husbandmen they see themselves ; in their doom, whatever it may be, they see their own.

Whilst the people, then, in ready answer to Christ's question, speak out the natural verdict of the unbiased conscience, and say, 'He will destroy the husbandmen, and give the vineyard unto others,' they, as they hear such a heavy sentence passed, almost involuntarily exclaim, 'God forbid.' Jesus looks at them as they utter this vehement disclaimer, and says : 'What is this then that is written? Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Christ quotes here from the 118th Psalm, a psalm familiar to the Jews as pointing throughout to their Mes-

siah ; so familiar, that it was from it that those salutations were taken by which Christ on his entry into the city had been hailed by the common people two days before, as well as those hosannas to the son of David which the children had repeated the next day in the Temple, the echoes of which must still have been ringing somewhat unpleasantly in the ears of the chief priests and the rulers. Jesus wishes by this quotation to carry on as it were the prophecy of the parable ; to show what would be the doom inflicted upon the perpetrators of that dark deed, the murder of the Father's only and well-beloved Son. That Son was to be himself the infli^cter of this doom ; but as he in the parable was dead, and could not be represented as a living agent, the image of the vineyard is dropped, and another is introduced, fitting in however with the other,—the rejecters of the stone being the same with the husbandmen of the vineyard. The chief priests might have some little difficulty in seeing how it was that in speaking about the corner-stone Jesus was but carrying on the same history a step or two beyond the point at which the parable, by the necessity of its structure, had stopped. Any such difficulty was at once removed by

Christ's dropping for a moment all allegory, all imagery : 'Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*' They can mistake no longer ; the kingdom is to be taken from them ; as the occupants of the vineyard, they are to be ejected. But is this all ? does this exhaust their doom ? What about that doom may this new image of the stone convey ? 'Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder.' First the stone is passive, suffering all kinds of rough usage to be heaped upon it, revenging itself the while for all the insults offered by causing those who offer them to stumble over it, and fall and be broken. But at last, as if invested with some inner living power, or as if lifted and wielded by some invisible but all-powerful hand, it becomes active, gets into motion, lifts itself up, and with a crushing weight descends upon its despisers and grinds them to powder. Such was Christ to that commonwealth of the Jews, to that proud theocracy of which the men before him were the head. By the Great Archi-

* Matt. xxi. 43.

tect he had been laid of old in Zion, the chief foundation of the great spiritual edifice to be reared out of the ruins of the Fall. For many a generation he had been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. All these wrongs of the past he passively had borne, and now in his own person he is to submit to reproach and suffering and death ; but the hour that was to see him exalted because of this, and proclaimed to be the head of the corner, was to see him coming also in judgment. He was to arise out of his place ; he was to pour contempt on his despisers ; utter desolation was to come upon the city and people of the Jews. The stone was to fall upon it, and it was in truth a very grinding of that land to powder, when every vestige of its ancient institutions was swept away, its people perished in multitudes, and the remnant, scattered over all the earth, was as the dust which the wind drives to and fro.

What Jesus was to the Jews, he is in a certain sense to all. Primarily and mainly, he is set before us as the one and only true and broad and firm foundation on which to build our hopes ; a foundation open and easy of access, no guarding fence around it, so near that a single step is all that is needed to plant us on

it, broad enough for all to stand upon, and firm enough to sustain the weight of the whole world's dependence. Such is Christ to all who go to him in humility, in simplicity, in child-like trust, resting upon him and upon him only for their forgiveness and acceptance with God. But such he may not be, he is not, to all. The very stone, so elect and precious to some, to others may be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. There before us all, in the broad highway of life, it lies. It will bear now unmoved and unprovoked any treatment that you may give. But it shall not remain so for ever; and woe to him who, having despised and rejected it all through life, shall see it darkening above his head, descending to crush. It were better for that man that he had never been born!

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IV.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON—QUESTION AS TO THE TRIBUTE-MONEY.*

Tuesday.

HAVING repelled the challenge to state and to produce the authority upon which he was acting, Jesus had addressed first to the challengers the parable of the two sons, and then to the people the parable of the wicked husbandmen. In both of these parables the conduct of his rejecters had been exposed, and the fate in store for them foretold. Yet another parable was added, intended to complete that picture of the future which Jesus would hold up before their eyes. This parable, the last addressed by our Lord to the people at large, was partly a repetition, partly an expansion of the one delivered some time before in Peræa, on the occasion of an entertainment

* Matt. xxii. 1-22 ; Mark xii. 13-17 ; Luke xx. 20-26.

given to Christ by a chief Pharisee, and which is recorded in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. It is interesting to notice the difference between the two, corresponding so accurately, as they do, with the differences of time and circumstances under which they were spoken. When the first was uttered, the hostility of the hierarchy, though deep and deadly, was latent. The certain man, therefore, who makes a supper, and sends out his servant to tell them that were bidden to come, for all things were now ready, has nothing more to complain of than that his messenger and his message were both treated with neglect. With more or less courteousness, more or less decision of purpose, more or less implied preference for other engagements, the invitation was refused. And the penalty visited upon this refusal was simply exclusion from the banquet. "For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper"

In the second parable, the guilt of the first invited guests is greater, the penalty more severe. The certain man who makes a feast becomes a king, invitations issuing from whom had all the character of commands. And it is for no common purpose that the royal banquet

is prepared. It is for a great state occasion ; to celebrate a great state event. Even therefore had the king's invitations met with no other or different reception from that given to the invitation of the house-holder, a much higher guilt had been involved in declining it ; for a royal banquet made under such circumstances had something in it of a public or political character. To make light of an invitation to such a banquet, to plead any of the events or duties or engagements of ordinary life as a reason for declinature and absence, would not only be in the highest degree discourteous, it would have a taint of treason in it, an element of disloyalty and rebellion.

In the one case a single servant is sent forth, and when he tells the bidden guests to come, for all things are now ready, with one consent they begin to make excuse ; but there is nothing of contempt or malignity displayed towards either the provider of the feast or the servant who bears the summons. There is an apparent desire to make out something like a good excuse. In the second parable the king sends out not one, but a band of servants, who meet with a flat refusal. Other servants are sent forth not to punish, not to announce the king's

purpose to exclude, but to renew the invitation—to entreat the refusers to reconsider their resolution. Some make light of it, treat this second invitation with even greater disrespect than the first; while others are so provoked that they take the messengers, spitefully entreat them, and slay them. Is it wonderful that the wrath of the king should in consequence of this be so much greater than that of the simple householder; that he should treat the heavier offence with a deeper mark of displeasure than mere exclusion from his presence and his table? 'He sends forth his armies and destroys these murderers, and burns up their city.'

This bringing in of armies, this mention of a city and its destruction, at once calls up to our thoughts the ruin hovering over Jerusalem, and teaches us to connect the parable of the marriage-feast with that of the wicked husbandmen; both intended to set forth the terrible punishment of the Jewish people—the taking of the kingdom from them, and the giving it to others. In the closing part, however, of the latter parable—that which speaks of the new guests brought in from the highways, and the king coming in and detecting the man without the wedding-garment,—it goes beyond the for-

mer ; it points not to Jewish but to Christian times. And it should fix our attention all the more upon the closing section of the parable, that while in all the other teachings of our Lord during his last day in the Temple, strict regard was had to the audience that was then before him,—to the events that were so soon to transpire in Jerusalem and Judea, he casts here a prophetic glance upon the ages that were to succeed the fall of the Jewish theocracy—as if he could not pass away from his pre-intimation of the forfeiture of the kingdom by the sons of Abraham without warning those who were to be brought in to take their place, that a no less watchful eye would be upon them as they sat down at the provided banquet, that the badge of loyalty without and the spirit of true loyalty within would be required of all, and that the want of it would incur a penalty not less heavy than that visited on their predecessors, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders.

Their wrath at the speaker knew no bounds. They would have lain hold of him and borne him off to inflict the condign punishment that in their eyes he so fully merited. But they feared the people. They were not sure of the

temper of the crowd by which they were surrounded, not sure how far they would be supported by the Roman authorities. Outwardly curbing, inwardly nursing their wrath, they withdrew to try another method. They have been baffled in the attempt openly to confront him ; but could they not entangle him in his talk by some crafty questions, and force from him an answer that might supply material for accusation, 'that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor?*' Leaving some of their underlings to watch him, so as to be ready to report all he says and does, they retire to hold a secret conclave. They call the Herodians into council, whom they find quite willing to combine with them in the execution of any plan that promised to prevail against the man whom they equally hate. The deliberation is brief. A step at once suggests itself that cannot but succeed, which, one way or other, is certain to damage, if not utterly to ruin, their common enemy. The chief priests, however, and scribes, and elders, the leading men who have just had that humiliating colloquy with him, will not go

* Luke xx. 20.



themselves to carry out this well-concocted scheme. They have had enough of personal collision. They will not venture again into his presence, to be taunted and maligned before the people. It is besides a very low and hypocritical piece of work that is to be done, and they commit it to other hands, who take with them some of these Herodians, to give the matter less of a purely Pharisaic character.

Having got their instructions, these emissaries approach Jesus, feigning themselves to be sincere men, bent upon ascertaining what their duty is. And when they come they say to him, 'Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man, for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth,'—a very insidious piece of flattery, a great part of its power lying in the apparent honesty with which the men who offer it embrace themselves among the number of those for whom they are sure that Jesus will not care; a kind of flattery consisting in attributing to the person flattered a superiority to flattery, to which, if well administered, our weak humanity is peculiarly susceptible. With this artful preface, which they hope will tempt him to speak boldly out the answer that may suit

them, they say, 'Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?' It is not the expediency but the lawfulness of paying the tribute exacted by the Romans, that they ask about. That lawfulness was denied by many who, under the force and pressure of necessity, yet paid the tax. The Pharisees themselves, who owed much of their power and popularity to their faithful adherence to the principles of the old Jewish theocracy, disputed the lawfulness of the exaction. They took their stand here upon a very plain declaration of Moses: 'Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.'*

When the Herodian family, one not of Jewish but of Idumean extraction, backed by the power of Rome, took possession of the throne of Judea, the entire Jewish Sanhedrim, appealing to this scripture, protested against what they rightly enough regarded as a violation of the Mosaic law. Their protest, however, was

* Deut. xvii. 15.

unavailing. The first two Herods were kept upon the throne by the Roman Emperors, whose policy it then was through them to rule Judea. Ere long indeed, and this happened during our Saviour's life, the mask was dropped. The sovereignty of Judea was directly assumed by the Romans. One or other of its northern provinces was given to one of the Herods, who governed it under the title of tetrarch or king ; but Judea proper was placed under a Roman Procurator. Such a method of foreign rule was more obnoxious to the Jewish people than the government of the Herods, who, though by descent Idumean, had by intermarriage with Jewish families won for themselves something like a Jewish title. It was the policy, and we have no doubt it was the honest principle, of the Pharisees secretly to foster the general and deep, but repressed and smouldering opposition to the Roman rule. Distinguished as a religious party for their extreme and punctilious attachment to the ceremonialism of the Jewish law, as a political party they won golden opinions of the people by standing in the vanguard as upholders of the national independence. Among the many political questions which the state of the country raised, was one about the

payment of the poll-tax imposed by the foreign governors. Arguing from the premise that the whole foundation of the Roman authority was hollow, grounded on usurpation and incapable of defence, the leading political Pharisees vehemently denied the legality of the imposition. The Herodians, the defenders of the legitimacy of the Herodian dynasty, could not well deny the justice of the Roman claim to civil supremacy, as it had been by the Roman power that the dynasty which they supported had been instituted. Yet among them there were many who bore no goodwill to the Italian conquerors, and who looked to the rule of the Herods as the best protection against an entirely foreign domination,—the best preservative of something like a separate and independent national existence. Such kind of Herodians perhaps they were who now associated themselves with the Pharisees in putting the question to Jesus—‘Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?’

They think that they have shut him up; no door seems open to evade or to decline an answer. A simple affirmative or a simple negative must be given. On either side, the diffi-

culty and the danger to Jesus seem nearly equal. If he shall say it is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, his favor with the people is gone ; his pretensions to be the Messiah are scattered to the winds ; from being an object of attraction and attachment he becomes an object of alienation and contempt. Should he, on the other hand, say, as they fondly hope he will, that it is not lawful, the weapon is at once put into their hands which they can use against him with fatal effect. They have but to report him to Pilate as a stirrer-up of sedition, and prove their charge by his own declaration made in the presence of the people. But they are not prepared for the manner in which the insidious question is to be dealt with. 'Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?' said Jesus ; 'show me a penny,'—the coin in common circulation. There were two kinds of money at that time in use among the Jews,—the Roman, by which all the common business of life was transacted, and in which the capitation-tax, about which the question that had been raised, was paid ; and the old Jewish, still partially employed, and in which especially the Temple tax was paid. They bring him one of the Roman coins—a denarius. He looks at it and

says, 'Whose image and superscription is this?' They say to him, 'Cæsar's.' He says to them, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

By this singular and short reply the hypocrisy and the inconsistency of his questioners is at once exposed. The mere payment of the tribute is but a secondary matter after all. The true, the great question was, Should the Roman rule be submitted to or not? was it or was it not lawful to submit to that authority, to bear the foreign yoke? This question the Jewish people and these Pharisees, their most influential leaders, had suffered so far to be decided. They had yielded to, and accepted, the foreign yoke. There was this manifest token of subjection, that Roman money was circulating among them as the common and accepted coin of the realm. It was an acknowledged maxim, it had become a rabbinical proverb, that the coin of a country tells who is its king. Things being in that state in Judea, it was an idle, it was a deceitful, it was a base and malignant thing, to come to Jesus and try to force from him such a decision upon that isolated point of the payment of the tax, as would involve him with the Roman authorities. Let those who

thought Cæsar was a usurper, and were prepared to cast off his authority, raise at once the standard of rebellion, and try the hazard of a civil war. Let those who, holding the existing government to be illegitimate, thought at the same time that matters were not ripe for open resistance, bide their time, and mature their measures as well and as secretly as they pleased; but let not any, like these Pharisees and Herodians, while fawning upon the Roman governor, and forward in all the outward expressions of submission, pretend to have any difficulty about the payment of the tax; above all, let them not, while trying to keep up their own power and popularity by letting it be understood that they sympathized with the people in their opposition to the foreign rule, try to inveigle one who from the first had stood aloof and declined to take any part whatever in the political dissensions of the country, so as to accuse him to the governor, and have him condemned and executed for that which, neither in their own eyes, nor in that of the great majority of their fellow-countrymen, was accounted as a crime.

Coupling it with his demand for a sight of the Roman coin, and his pointing to the image

and superscription stamped thereon, I have no doubt that those of Christ's auditors would have been right who interpreted the first part of Christ's answer, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," as implying that it was lawful to pay the tribute-money; right and consistent—so long as Cæsar or any one was acknowledged as king, and the money from his mint taken and employed—that the tribute levied by him should be paid; the duty of obedience springing from the fact of the existing dominion. But there can be as little doubt that those also of that audience would have been right who interpreted the second part of Christ's answer, "Render to God the things that are God's," as carrying with it a severe and most merited rebuke of his questioners. For had they but fulfilled that acknowledged obligation, had they been but true to the spirit and laws of their own ancient government, no Roman soldier had ever invaded their borders, no Roman governor had sat in the Hall of Judgment at Jerusalem. It was their own failure in rendering to God the things that were his, a failure of which Pharisees and Herodians had alike been guilty, which had reduced their country to bondage; and now to

be wrangling about the narrow question of the payment of the tribute, what was it but as if the men who by some act and deed had exposed themselves to the infliction of a certain penalty, were to sit down and discuss on abstract grounds the legitimacy of the authority by which that penalty was exacted?

Considering Christ's answer in its immediate bearings upon those who then stood before him, it is not difficult to see how completely it availed to silence his questioners, and to put it out of the power of any of the parties there represented to turn it against him. They could but marvel at him, and hold their peace.

But separating this memorable saying of Christ from the particular circumstances under which it was uttered, and the immediate object it was intended to subserve, let us look at it as an aphorism of infinite wisdom, thrown into that proverbial form that gives it so easy and so strong a hold upon the memory, promulgated for the universal guidance of mankind. 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; unto God the things that are God's.' Both precepts may and ought to be obeyed. There need not be, there ought not to be, any discord or collision between them. Christ would

not have imposed the double obligation had there been any natural or necessary conflict between the two. Each may be met and fully satisfied, the other being left entire and uninvaded. It ought never to keep a man from rendering all due obedience to his earthly sovereign, that he is faithful in his allegiance to him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. It ought never to keep him from serving aright his Heavenly King, that he has an earthly one to whom all honor and obedience are due. It would be to misinterpret altogether the golden rule of Christ, to regard it as if it set before us two masters, both of whom we were called to serve, the one having authority in one region and over so much ground, the other having authority over a quite different region and within quite different limits, whose claims might occasionally become competing and conflicting. In rendering to Cæsar the things that righteously are Cæsar's, we can never be keeping from God the things that righteously are God's. And if the things that are God's be duly and fully rendered, Cæsar shall get what is his as one of the very things that God requires at our hands. The second precept, in fact, embraces the first, as the greater covers the less.

Let it, however, be at once acknowledged, that rich and full of wisdom as the saying of our Lord is, it appears to fail in application ; for is not, it may be said, the very point upon which we especially need guidance, left by it vague and undecided? What are the things that are Cæsar's? What are the things that are God's? How far in each case can and may we go? Where in each case ought we to stop? A line of demarcation it is thought there must be here between the two sets of obligations, the two kinds of duty and of service. But the adage does not help us to lay it down. Now, strange as it may appear, it is the very absence of any such precise and definite directory as the one thus craved for, its careful avoidance of drawing any separating line between our civil and political duties on the one hand, and our religious ones on the other, which, to our view, stamps it with the signature of a wisdom that is divine. Christ does not define what we are to do, or what we are to refuse to do, in order to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. No ; but he gives us to understand that these never can be, or at least never ought to be, such as to interfere in the slightest degree with the higher duty we

owe to God. He does not define what we are to do, or what not to do, in order to render to God the things that are his. No ; but he gives us to understand that these never are or can be such as to interfere in the slightest degree with the dutiful obedience that we owe to kings and to all that are in authority over us. We are not, under the cloak of being faithful to Cæsar, to become disobedient to God. We are not, under the cloak of being obedient to God, to be unfaithful to our earthly ruler. And if, with equal singleness of eye, equal purity of motive, we make it equally a matter of conscience to keep both the precepts that he has linked together, no discord shall arise, no need of dividing lines be felt. I believe it to be impossible logically to define, so as absolutely to distinguish from one another, our social and political duties from our religious ones. To look only at a single section of the wide domain. When Church and State have come into conflict, the attempt has always failed, I believe must ever fail, to mark off the boundary-line between them, and to say exactly and all along the line where the authority of the one ends, and that of the other begins. Collisions, unhappily, have arisen. The past is

full of them : no darker chapters in the history of our race than those in which the record of these conflicts is preserved. But how has this come about ? From kings becoming tyrants ; from their forgetting that they, and all their subjects along with them, should render to God the things that are God's ; which cannot be done unless the rights of the individual conscience be respected, and each man left free to believe and worship as that conscience dictates :—from priests becoming kings, from their forgetting that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and that it was never meant to be so administered as to call in the aids of earthly power—to use those instruments which earthly sovereigns are alone entitled to employ.

On both sides here the deepest wrongs have been done, the foulest crimes committed. The august name of royalty has been abused, to trample upon the still more sacred rights of conscience. It was abused when the proud monarch of Babylon raised the golden image in the plain of Dura, and issued his order that all people and nations should worship it ; it was abused when Darius signed the writing and issued the decree that no man should present any petition to God or man for thirty days, but to

himself ; it was abused when the rulers of the Jews summoned Peter and John before them, and straitly charged them that they should speak no more of Jesus to the people ; it was abused when the Emperor of Germany called Martin Luther before the Diet, and commanded him to retract the faith that he had derived from the sacred oracles ; it was abused when the Stuarts prescribed to the Covenanters of Scotland the manner in which they were to worship God, treated all who refused compliance with their ordinances as rebels against the throne, persecuting them even unto death. We cannot count Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the Apostles of our Lord, Luther, the Scottish Covenanters, as violators of the precept, ‘ Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s,’ because at cost or peril of their lives they heroically resolved to obey God rather than man. The sacred name of religion has also been abused. It was abused when Cromwell taught his men to see in their enemies the enemies of the Lord, and claimed the divine sanction for all the slaughter effected by the swords of his Ironsides ; it was abused when he who arrogated to himself the title of God’s vicegerent upon earth, raised himself above all

earthly sovereigns, took it on him to sit in judgment upon their titles to their crowns, dethroned princes at his pleasure, and released subjects from allegiance to their lawful kings. It was still more awfully abused when spiritual offenders against the Church—those who believed not as she would have them to believe, worshipped not as she would have them to worship—were treated as criminals, to be punished by the sword, and the civil power was called on to enforce the spiritual sentence, and many a dungeon witnessed the torture, and many a death-pile was raised, and many a martyr-spirit was chased up through the fires to its place beneath the altar.

Fanatics on the one hand, and despots on the other, have sadly traversed the Saviour's golden rule, and in doing so have only taught us how difficult a thing it is for weak humanity, when under the blinding influence of prejudice and passion, to bear in mind the double precept of our Lord: 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's : to God the things that are God's.'

V.

QUESTION OF THE SADDUCEES AS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.*

Tuesday.

BAFFLED and exposed by Christ's answer as to the payment of the tribute-money, the Pharisees retire. And now their great rivals, the Sadducees, take the field, and try to entangle Jesus in his talk. Though constituting a powerful party, it is not till the closing scene of the Saviour's life that the Sadducees appear to have taken any active part against him. It was alien from their disposition to interfere with any popular religious movement till it took such shape as made it in their eyes dangerous to the state, and then they did not scruple summarily to quench it. They looked with a haughty contempt upon what they regarded as the groundless beliefs and idle

* Matt. xxii. 23-33 ; Mark xii. 18-27 ; Luke xx. 27-40.

superstitious practices of the great bulk of their countrymen. In common with them they believed indeed in the divine origin of the Jewish faith, restricted as they took that faith to be, mainly to the announcement that there was but one God, the God of Israel, in opposition to all idolatry. They admitted the divine authority of the laws and institutions of Moses, whom they especially honored as their great heaven-sent and heaven-instructed lawgiver. But they rejected the whole of that oral tradition which had grown up around the primitive Mosaic revelation, which had come generally to be regarded, and was especially defended by the Pharisees, as of equal authority with it. They accepted the other books of the Old Testament as well as the Pentateuch, but there seems good reason to believe that they held the latter in peculiar and pre-eminent esteem. In their interpretation of the Pentateuch they adhered rigidly to the letter, rejecting all the false glosses and elaborate explanations and inferences which the Pharisaic Rabbis had introduced. Into their religious creed the Sadducees would admit nothing which Moses had not directly and unambiguously announced. True to their character as the freethinkers or

rationalists of their age and nation, they were incredulous as to any other existences or powers influencing human affairs beyond those that lay open to the observation of their senses. They did not—as professed disciples of Moses they could not—repudiate the agency of God as exerted in the creation and government of the world. But they limited that agency to a general supervision and control which left full scope to human volition and human effort, which they regarded as the chief factors in the unfolding of events. So far as their professed faith would let them, they were materialists. They acknowledged the existence of one great Spirit. They could not deny that beings called angels had occasionally, in the early times whose history was recorded by Moses, appeared to take some part in earthly affairs. But, disbelieving in the existence of any other spirit save that of the Supreme, whatever their explanation of these angelic manifestations, it was one that left them at liberty to deny, as they did, that there was any permanent and separate order of beings called angels standing between men and God. They said that there was ‘no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit.’*

* Acts xxiii. 8.

They believed in the soul of man only as exhibited in and by the body which enshrined it ; with that body it perished at death. The future state, a world of rewards and punishments hereafter for the things now done in the body, was but a dream. To speak of the resurrection of the body at some after period was a solecism. There was no spirit for it to be re-united with. It might please God, out of the materials that had once formed one human body, to make another like it, and to plant in it another soul ; but there was, there could be, no real resurrection of the dead, no rising to life again of the same beings that had been buried. If such a thing could be, and were actually to take place, the beings so raised would return (as they imagined) to the same kind of life as that which previously had been theirs ; and from the very absurdities and contradictions which would be implied in this, they drew many an argument against the popular belief in a resurrection, which those adhering to that belief, holding it as they did in a very gross and materialist fashion, were unable to meet.

How did such men look upon Jesus Christ ? Perhaps in the first instance as a weak but

harmless enthusiast, little worth their notice, or worth only a smile or a scoff. His teaching, so far as it was reported to them, or they knew anything about it, was utterly distasteful to them ; it was animated by a spirit totally the reverse of theirs ; it was full of faith in the invisible. In it the spiritual, the future, the eternal, not only enwrapped but absorbed the present, the temporary, the sensible. God was no longer a mere name for a remote and inaccessible Being, who sat aloof upon a throne of exalted supremacy. He was the Father, continually engaged in guiding, protecting, providing ; clothing the lilies of the field ; feeding the fowls of the air ; causing his sun to shine ; sending his rain from heaven ; caring for all the creatures of his power, all the children of his love. No thought was to be taken for the body as compared with that which should be taken for the soul. The world beyond the present stood out in vivid perspective and relief. The angels of God were represented as rejoicing there over each sinner that repented on earth, and the spirits of the dead as waiting to welcome each brother spirit as it passed up to its place beside them in the heavens.

How the Sadducees regarded the miracles of our Lord it is difficult to say. They would regard his feeding of the hungry and his curing of the diseased either as impositions, or exercises of some occult power of which he had become possessed. But when he pretended to cast out devils and to raise the dead, his miracles came into direct collision with their unbelief, and awakened more than incredulity—stirred up malignity. He was in their eyes a base and bad man who could thus deceive the people. If he would prove that he came from God, let some sign direct from God be given. The only occasion on which, during the course of our Saviour's ministry, the Sadducees interfered with him, was when they once joined the Pharisees in demanding from him a sign from heaven. They got signs enough, some of them wrought under their own eyes, as in the healing of the man born blind, and in the raising of Lazarus, but signs which only increasingly exasperated them, so that when they saw that the movement created by Jesus was assuming politically so threatening an aspect, they were quite willing at last to league with the Pharisees, and assist in removing him ; for it was better, so said one of themselves, that one man should die

than that the whole nation should perish. Parties to the recent resolution come to by the Sanhedrim, the Sadducees were watching with as jealous eyes as the Pharisees all that was taking place in the courts of the Temple. Though conspiring with them in their design, it may have been with some degree of secret complacency that they noticed how in the word-battle about the tribute money he had foiled the rival sect. They have a question of their own, however, with which, as they fancy, he will find it more difficult to deal ; one with which they had often pressed their adversaries, and to which they had never got any satisfactory reply. They will see how Jesus will deal with it. If he agree with them, then adieu to his power with the people ; if he fail to answer, what a triumph both over him and all credulous believers in a resurrection !

They state their case and propose their query. Moses had commanded that if a Jew died childless, leaving a widow, his brother should marry her, and had ruled that the child of the second marriage should be reckoned as the heir of the brother predeceased. There were seven brothers, they told Jesus, who all died, each having been successively the husband of the same

woman ; and last of all the woman died . ‘in the resurrection, therefore,’ they say to him, very confidently—somewhat coarsely and contemptuously,—‘whose wife shall she be of the seven ?’ Christ’s answer is direct and emphatic . ‘Ye do ‘err,’ he says, ‘not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.’ His charge against them is not one of hypocrisy, but of error, of wrong belief, that error having a two-fold source : (1.) Their ignorance of the meaning of the Scriptures, of that very book of Moses from which they had quoted ; (2.) Their ignorance of the power of God, of the manner of its exercise generally, and more particularly, of the way in which it should be exercised in effecting that resurrection which they denied . Taking these sources of error in inverse order, Jesus first unfolds wherein their errors as to the power of God consisted . They looked upon it too much as a mere force, illimitable indeed, yet fixed, unvarying, working now as it had ever done before, to work hereafter even as it was working now . They failed to recognize it as the forthputting of the energy of a living Being who was ever thereby embodying his will, expressing his purposes, executing his plans ; —the very same error as to the power of God

which lies at the root of a large part of our modern infidelity, traceable, as it easily is, up to a denial of the personal agency of a Being who has plans and purposes and a will of which the whole creation is but a constant and gradual development. But, still more particularly, the Sadducees had erred in limiting the future manifestation of the power of God, in imagining that if the dead were to rise again, they were to live subject to the same conditions, united to each other by the same relationships with those that now exist. Prior to the Incarnation, very little beyond the bare fact that there was to be a resurrection of the dead had been revealed. Had any right conceptions of the character and power of the great Creator been entertained, preparing the mind that entertained them for an endless variety in the future as we now know that there has been in the past, the very nature of the fact, apart from all further information about it, that there was to be hereafter a general resurrection of the dead, should have stifled in the birth such an idle objection as that which these Sadducees were urging ; for, come how it might, let it be attended with whatever other outward changes in the physical condition of our globe, it was in

itself a change too great to allow of any ideas borrowed from the present condition of things being transferred to that new state of which it must form the initial stage. But Jesus goes a step further than this: he puts his hand forward partially to lift the veil, and tell somewhat of the nature and the extent to which these changes will be carried which the resurrection will involve. 'And Jesus, answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.'* This much is told us here, that great changes are in store for us; that out of the grave a new economy is to arise, elevated in all its conditions and relationships above that under which we now dwell. But how much also remains untold; how much to check that prurient curiosity with which we are tempted to pry into the future, and extort from it its secrets!

* Luke xx. 34-36.

We have got in the Bible two brief sketches which none but the finger of God could have drawn, a sketch of the beginning and a sketch of the end of the world as it now is. The one the picture of the past, the story of the creation, how very difficult has it been for us to decipher it ; how slowly are we spelling out its meaning ; how much of it still remains obscure ; how utterly should we have failed in interpreting it aright, had it not so happened that, in these later years, we have got access to other records, also somewhat dim as yet, which the events as they occurred stamped enduringly upon the solid rocks. Now if the scriptural picture of the past was so dark and so difficult to understand, was in our hands so long misunderstood and misinterpreted, how can we expect it to be otherwise with the scriptural picture of the future, which tells of a coming epoch more unlike the present than is the present to any epoch of the past ? How wise then and becoming for us, till the events occur that shall yield the true interpretation, to confine ourselves to the simple and general truths that lie upon the face of those figurative descriptions of the future state which abound in the Bible, and which ought never to be treated as liter-

ally and historically true. How vain to use what were meant only to be obscure hints, as stepping-stones, from which fancy may safely mount and soar away at random. Let us be satisfied with the little that we can now know. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. We see but through a glass darkly, nor will any straining of our eyeballs make clearer that cloudy medium through which alone we are permitted to gaze. Standing with that wonderful future before us, on which our eye cannot but often and eagerly be fixed, there is happily for us another and a better occupation than that of filling the void spaces with forms and colors of our own creation. Children of that coming resurrection we all must be. No mountain shall have breadth enough to cover us, no ocean depth enough to hide us, when once the imperial summons soundeth, "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment." But children of a blessed resurrection, of the resurrection unto life, we can only be by becoming now the children of God. Let that be our present, our steadfast aim ; let that goal be reached, and then let us rest quietly in the assurance that, raised with Christ, we shall be sharers of his immortality, shall die no more,

but be as the angels which are in heaven.

The error of the Sadducees as to the power of God having been exposed, Christ proceeds to notice their error as to the Scriptures : ' As touching the dead that they rise ; have ye not read in the book of Moses ?'* Among the Jews, down till near the times of Christ, the first five books of our Bible formed but one book, written continuously on one roll of parchment. It is out of this book, called ordinarily the Book of the Law, that he quotes a sentence in proof of the resurrection. He might have cited other ampler and much clearer testimony from other parts of the sacred Scriptures, especially from the Psalms and the books of Job, Daniel, and Hosea ; but he is dealing now with the Sadducees, and he takes the passage from the same writings to which they had themselves appealed. ' Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living : ye therefore do greatly err.† The link that

* Mark xii. 26.

† Mark xii. 26, 27.

binds here the premise to the conclusion is anything but apparent at first sight. The inference seems neither natural nor necessary. Does God's calling himself the God of the departed patriarchs of itself prove that these patriarchs were still living? Is this not the simple and only meaning of the passage quoted, that he who had been the God of the fathers would be the God of the children? Even granting that the continued existence of those, of whom God spake as being still their God, was to be legitimately inferred from the expression cited, what proof was involved in that of their resurrection? Might the soul not live though the body were left forever in the grave? In answer to such questions, let it be noted that Christ's reply to the Sadducees was evidently rather general than specific—cut at the root of their unbelief rather than at the particular branch of it pressed on his regard. These men were unbelievers in the resurrection of the body, because they were unbelievers, in the immortality of the soul. The two were so connected in their regards that they stood or fell together. Prove to them the one, the major proposition—that the soul survived the dissolution of the body,—and you cut away

the ground upon which their rejection of the other rested. Establish the fact that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were still living when God spake of them as he did to Moses from the bush, and you overturned the foundation of their infidelity. And this is what Jesus does, not so much by argument, as by his own authoritative declaration that there lay in the phrase, 'I am the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' a depth of meaning that the Sadducees had failed to penetrate,—that it was nothing short of an announcement that the relationship in which God stood to these departed patriarchs was so peculiar, so close, so gracious, as to preclude the possibility of either soul or body ever finally perishing, as to involve at once the immortality of the one and the resurrection of the other. We would be ready at once to acknowledge that, had Christ not put this meaning upon the phrase, had he not furnished us with this key for the unlocking of its full significance, it would not have appeared to us necessarily to have involved the inference that is drawn from it. But let us be equally ready to accept the interpretation of it that he has given. We would do so even though the links that bound the

premise to the conclusion remained obscure ; but we lay this brief compendious argument in in favor of the resurrection alongside that expanded proof which St. Paul unfolds in the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and light begins to dawn upon it.

The idle question of the Sadducees was much akin in character, owned the same spiritual pedigree, with that dealt with by the apostle : 'But some man will say, How are the dead raised up ? and with what body do they come ?' As Jesus met the query put to him about the woman and her seven husbands, by telling his questioners that they utterly mistook the nature of the changes that the resurrection was to bring with it, for in that world it was to usher in, there was to be neither marrying nor giving in marriage ; so Paul met the questioners of his day by telling them that they too had fallen into the like mistake of confounding the future with the present ; that it was not to be the same body that was buried which was to rise, but one as different from it as the seed that rots beneath the sod is from the stalk of wheat that issues from it ; that flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God ; that the natural was to be changed into the spiritual,

the corruptible into the incorruptible, the terrestrial into the celestial. And just as Christ deduces from the covenant relationship in which God stood to the patriarchs the preservation of their entire being, and the clothing it with a deathless immortality, even so from the relationship in which Jesus stands to all who are in vital union with him, does the Apostle draw the very same conclusion. In taking their nature on him, in bearing their sins, in dying that they might live, Jesus took their whole humanity and wound it round him, and so identified it with his own being and estate, that as in him they live, with him they must rise again, his life involving theirs, his resurrection involving theirs. Mysterious incorporating union with Jesus Christ! that begins with the simple act of trust and love which binds our weak and sinful spirit to our Redeemer, and brings us into such close and hallowed fellowship with God, that we can hear him say to us, 'I am thy God, even as I was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and of the faithful in all ages!'—what a linked array of untold incalculable benefits and blessings does it carry in its train! This among the rest, that, by passing them through the

corruption of the grave, he shall change these bodies of ours and make them like to his own glorious body ; and associate them as meet companions of the purified spirits that he shall exalt to the glories and services and blessedness of heaven. Dead by nature as we all are in our sins, let us so embrace Him who is the resurrection and the life that we shall be quickened together with Christ, raised up together with him through faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead. ‘For if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness ; and if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

VI.

THE LAWYER'S QUESTION—THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS—CHRIST, DAVID'S SON AND DAVID'S LORD.*

Tuesday.

PHARISEES, Herodians, Sadducees have each in turn been foiled in their assaults. Jesus has either turned aside the edge of their insidious questions, or has given such reply as recoils upon the questioners. Among the auditors who are standing by whilst this questioning is going on, there is one, himself a Pharisee and a scribe, who, struck with admiration at our Lord's answer, ventures an inquiry of his own. In making it he does not appear to have been animated by any sinister or malignant motive. He may, as St. Matthew seems to intimate, have been incited by others to put his question, in the hope that it

* Matt. xxii. 34-46 : Mark xii. 28-37.

might puzzle or perplex, but the question itself has no such character, reveals no such intent ; bearing as it does all the marks of being the ingenuous inquiry of one who, disturbed and dissatisfied with the manifold classifications and frivolous distinctions introduced by the ordinary teachers of the law, sought the judgment of Jesus in addressing to him the question, "Master, which is the great, the first of all the commandments? Is there any one commandment which is entitled to pre-eminence over all the rest? if there be, what is that one command, and upon what ground does its claim to supremacy repose?" Christ's answer is direct and explicit. There is, he tells the questioner, such a command. To love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength, is the first and the great commandment of the law. But there is another, a second commandment, like unto the first, flowing out of it, and founded on it : 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

The law of God, according to the view thus given of it, was not an aggregation of so many separate precepts, some of which a man might

keep, while he broke others ; suggesting of course the double question whether he broke more than he kept, as if that were to decide whether on the whole he was a breaker or a keeper of the law, or, were that held to be too rude and mechanical a method of judging, suggesting a comparison in point of importance between those commands that were kept and those that were broken, so as to supply a better estimate of the amount and value of the obedience rendered. In opposition to all such views of the law of God,—views not confined to the Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day, which lie at the bottom of all those crude notions as to man's actual standing towards the divine law which circulate widely in the world we live in, Jesus teaches that a divine unity pervades that law, a unity that cannot be broken : all its single and separate commands resting upon a common, firm, immutable basis ; all so connected in meaning, spirit, and obligation, that you cannot truly obey one without obeying all, nor break one without breaking all. Looking at the law in this oneness of character, Jesus points to the two requirements of love to God and love to one another as containing within themselves the sum and substance of the whole.

First we are called upon to love the Lord, to love him as our God, to love him with all our heart. It is not a mere barren faith in his divinity, a cold and distant homage, a bare acknowledgment of his sovereign right, a studious observance of prescribed forms of worship, the presenting of offerings, the making of sacrifices in his name and for his glory, that is required. Nothing but the supreme love of the heart, pouring out the wealth of its affections on him, can meet this great demand. There must be no other God before or beside him, no other having an equal or rival place in our regards. All idolatrous self-love, creature-love, world-love, must be renounced in order that this first and greatest of the commands be kept. 'And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Thyself thou mayest and shouldest love, but not supremely, not as distinct from or independent of God, but as one of his children, as an agent in his hands, as an instrument of his grace, as a vessel fashioned for his honor. Thus and thus only may self-love rightly form part of thy being, and enter into thy motives of action. And thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*: a mode and measure of loving others which can be truly followed and obeyed only

when love to God has predominated over the natural self-idolatry ; for if a man love himself supremely, he can love no other as he loves himself. All, however, is reduced to order, all brought within the limits of a possible achievement, when God gets his first and rightful place. You cannot love the God of love as he requires, without loving your neighbor also. The one love includes the other, sustains and modulates the other. If a man say he loves God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. It is in this way that the second command is like unto the first. They are two, and at the same time one. The first cannot be kept while the second is broken, nor the second be kept while the first is broken. A false or spurious kind of love to God, showing itself in all manner of superstitious worship and self-mortification, you may have, coupled with intensely malignant emotion towards others. Nay more, you may not only have them in conjunction, but the first ministering to the second—for there have been no greater haters of their fellow-men than those who have cherished such kind of love to God,—but the true, the only genuine love to God, we cannot have, without its generating kindly and benevolent affections towards

those who, equally with ourselves, are the objects of the divine regard. And, on the other hand, you may have a very ardent love to others apart from any deep love to God ; but search its nature and mark its development, and you will find that neither as to the objects it aims at, nor as to the boundaries it observes, does it come up to a faithful obedience to that requirement which obliges us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

‘On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ Love is the golden link that binds the whole together, and hangs the whole upon the Throne of the Eternal. Love is the fulfilling of the law. No precept is or can be kept where it is wanting. If love be present, obedience is at once rendered easy, and gets the character that makes it pleasing in the sight of God.

The scribe’s reply to our Lord’s answer shows how thoroughly he sympathized with it. He had admired the wisdom shown in Christ’s dealing with other questioners. He admires still more the wisdom shown in the answer to his own question. It accords entirely with what, after much thought bestowed upon the matter, he had himself come to believe. ‘Well, Master,

thou hast said the truth ; for there is one God, and there is none other but he ; and to love him with all the heart, and all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' The alacrity, the warmth, the vigor of this response, tell how intense the conviction was of which it was the utterance. Born and brought up though he had been in the very heart of a region where other and very different sentiments prevailed, he had come to see the comparative worthlessness of mere ceremonialism ; that offerings and sacrifices were worse than idle forms, mere solemn mockeries of God, if that inner sentiment of the heart, whence only they could have life and value, were wanting ; that the only true and animating principle of all piety towards God, and of all right conduct towards our fellow-men, was love ; that as the body without the spirit is dead, so all the mass of outward service without love was dead also. In our turn we wonder at the clear and just conception of the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial, to which, placed as he had been, this man had reached. But far as he has got, he yet lacked one thing. He

had ceased to put that value upon burnt-offerings and sacrifices that the mass of his countrymen did. His searching eye had seen through the hollowness of that external sanctimoniousness which was cultivated all around him with such sedulous care. But he had not yet come to see all that the first and greatest of the law's commands required, nor to feel how far short of its requirement his obedience had fallen. The hollowness of one way of attempting to obey it he fully saw, but the imperfections of that way which he had learned to put in its place, its impotence to justify the sinner before the tribunal of the Most High, he had not perceived. He wanted the humble, broken, contrite heart ; and so Jesus says to him, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God ;' not far from, but yet not in ; nearer by many a step than those who are going about in the rounds of a punctilious pietism to establish a righteousness of their own before God, but still not across the border-line which encompasses that kingdom which we must enter in the spirit of penitence and faith, as knowing and feeling that by the deeds of the law, how far soever our compliance with it be carried, no flesh living can be justified in the sight of God. Let the judg-

ment passed upon this man's position by the unerring Judge proclaim to us the truth, that it is not enough to have made the discovery of the worthlessness of all service without love ; that to get into the kingdom the further discovery must be made, that in all things, and especially in that very love to God which primarily and above all is required of us, we come so miserably short, have so grievously offended, that our only resource is to throw ourselves upon the rich mercy of our God revealed in Jesus Christ.

And was it not for the very purpose of turning the eyes of that scribe, the eyes of those who then stood around him, and the eyes of the men of all ages upon Himself, as the great revealer of the Father, that Jesus, having put all to silence, so that no man durst ask him any further question, in his turn becomes a questioner? The Law and the Prophets, whose sum and substance, so far as they were a code of duty, he had just declared, had something more in them than authoritative commands, were meant to accomplish other purposes besides that of making known to men their duty to God and to one another. There were promises and prophecies in them as well as precepts ; prophecies

and promises pointing to him by whom the law was to be magnified and made honorable. The law carried the gospel in its bosom. As to the one, the scribe put a question to Jesus, which goes to the very heart of the matter : as to the other, Jesus, seeing the Pharisees gathered around him, puts a question to them, which does the same. 'What think ye,' he says, 'of Christ? whose son is he?' The answer springs at once to every lip.

'Son of David' was the familiar, the favorite title, by which Christ, the expected Messiah, was known among them. When amazed by his miracles, the people began to conjecture that he was indeed the Christ, they said to one another, 'Is not this the son of David?' When the woman of Syrophenicia, and the two blind beggars of Capernaum, Bartimeus of Jericho, and others, would express their faith in his Messiahship, they did it by saying, 'Have mercy on us, thou son of David.' When the multitude, translated for the time out of incredulity into belief, surrounded him on his late triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they exclaimed, 'Hosanna to the son of David!' a salutation that the very children in the Temple next day repeated—showing us how wide and general

was the knowledge of this name. The answer then to Christ's first question is immediate and unhesitating. Not so the answer to the second : ' He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool ? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son ?' Jesus quotes here the verse of the 110th Psalm, a psalm assumed by him, and acknowledged by the Jews, to have been written by David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Two great personages appear in it, the one speaking of and to the other. It is with the high position, the complex character, the glorious destinies of the latter that the psalm is occupied throughout. Addressed by the highest of all epithets, he is introduced as sitting on the loftiest of all elevations. His kingly power, his eternal priesthood, his vast and ever-widening sway, are successively set forth. The Jews admitted that these were prophecies touching the Messiah. But between them and any right apprehension of the true character of the spiritual rule and empire of that Messiah there hung an obscuring mist. The bright and gorgeous vision that had floated for ages before

the eyes of the Jewish people was that of the future advent of a King, who was to raise the Jewish commonwealth to supremacy over the nations ; the vision of an earthly visible world-wide monarchy to be set up by the son of David ; a vision which, as their affairs grew dark and desperate, and their national independence was more and more threatened, stood forth in brighter and brighter coloring to gild the clouds that closed in darkness above their heads ; a vision clung to with an enthusiastic devotion which ennobled them as a nation, and led on to the deeds of chivalrous heroism, which have crowned with glory their last wars with the Romans, but which sunk them into spiritual blindness, and kept them from understanding the very prophecies upon which it ostensibly was founded. It was this vision, baseless as it was bright, which Jesus seeks to dissipate by putting to them his pointed inquiry : ‘ If Christ be David’s son, how could he at the same time be David’s Lord ? ’ The true key to that announcement in the 110th Psalm, and to many similar prophecies, was wanting to the Jews so long as the true and proper divinity, as well as the true and proper humanity, of

their Messiah remained unperceived and unacknowledged.

How often and how strikingly does Holy Writ set forth the double, and as it might seem incongruous relationship of Christ to David, as being at once his son and his Sovereign, his successor and yet his Lord,—set forth the singular, and as it might seem incompatible, qualities or characteristics that belong to him! ‘And there shall come forth,’ saith the prophet Isaiah, ‘a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.’* He is the rod, the branch growing up out of, hanging upon, and supported by the parent stem. But anon the image changes, and the rod, the branch, becomes the root by which the stem itself is supplied with nourishment and strength:—‘And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.’† ‘Behold,’ saith Jeremiah, ‘the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall

* Isa. xi. 1.

† Isa. xi. 10.

dwell safely ; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.* Here, by an equal violence of figurative language, the helpless dependent branch turns into a king, and that king is elevated, not to an earthly, but to the Heavenly Throne. Similarly in Zechariah : ' Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch ; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord : even he shall build the temple of the Lord ; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne ; and he shall be a priest upon his throne : and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.† Here, by a curious metamorphosis, the Branch first becomes the builder of a temple, then a ruler upon a throne, then a priest and king together, still upon the throne, establishing in that twofold capacity, or by help of the twofold prerogatives of prince and priest, the counsel or covenant or peace for Israel. So is it in the ancient prophecies, and so is it also in the visions of the Apocalypse. What is the first vision that John gets of Jesus in the heavenly places? A door is opened in heaven, a throne is seen

* Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

† Zech. vi. 12, 13.

set there ; the right hand of him who sits upon the throne holds out the book sealed with the seven seals. The strong angel proclaims with the loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?' The challenge is made, resounds through heaven, remains unanswered. The apostle begins to weep, because no man is found worthy to open and to read the book. One of the elders says to him, 'Weep not ; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.' John looks around for this opener coming, and lo ! in the midst of the throne there stands a Lamb as it had been slain, who takes the book and opens all its seals. He is told to look for a lion, and beheld a lamb. The lion and the lamb : the strongest and the fiercest, the weakest and the gentlest of animals ; in Jesus the qualities of both appear, blended in singular yet most attractive combination. And in the last revelation of himself he makes to John, Jesus says, 'I am the root and the offspring—the root and the branch—of David, and the bright and morning star.'

‘What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? How can he be David’s son and David’s Lord? These last words of our Lord’s public ministry, which filled the Temple courts of old, and found there no reply, are they not still going forth wherever the gospel of his grace is preached, waiting a response? Nor can any fit response be ever given till we see and be ready to acknowledge that in him, our Saviour, there meet and mingle all divine and human attributes—David’s Lord in his divinity, David’s son in his humanity; till we own him, and cleave to him, and hang upon him as at once our elder brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and our Lord and our God; the morning star on the brow of our dark night, that heralds the bright, the cloudless, the unending day.

VII.

THE WOES DENOUNCED UPON THE PHARISEES.*

Tuesday.

ADDRESSING himself specially to the Pharisees, Jesus asked them how Christ could be at once David's son and David's Lord, and they stood mute before him.

It is of this particular occasion that St. Mark says, "then the common people heard him gladly." They have been looking on and listening with intense curiosity—as well they might, for it is truly a marvellous scene that is before them. Here, on the one side, is one of themselves, an obscure Galilean, with no rank, or office, or acknowledged authority. There, on the other, stand the first men of the land, the chief of the priesthood the heads of the scribes. It had long been known that the Pharisees repudiated and condemned the teaching of Christ. More recently their enmity had

* Matt. xxiii. ; Mark xii. 38-40 ; Luke xx. 45-47.

come to a head. They had even offered a reward for his apprehension. Now they meet him face to face in the most public place in all the city. Will they arrest him? will they order their officers to bind him and carry him off to prison? No: in presence of the people they will crush with their words; they will convict him of ignorance, or incompetence, or sedition. And how shall this untaught, unfriended, unprotected man be able to stand against such odds? One can well enough imagine that when the strange word-duel in the Temple courts commenced, the sympathy of the people would be on Christ's side. Their sympathy deepens, wonder grows into admiration, as in each succeeding encounter he comes off more than conqueror, till at last his opponents stand silenced before him. Still, however, with all the wonder and all the admiration that Christ excites, other disturbing and perplexing emotions stir the breasts of the spectators: for those opponents of Jesus are the men to whom from infancy they have been taught to look up with unbounded reverence; to whose authority, especially in all matters of religious faith and practice, they have been accustomed implicitly to bow. The adversaries

of Jesus have been baffled but not convinced ; an unquenched, an intensified hatred to him is obviously burning within their breasts. How is it that none of their rulers will receive him, that almost to a man they are so bitterly opposed to him ?

May we not believe that in its immediate and direct object, as addressed to the perplexed and excited crowd that then stood before and around him, the discourse recorded in the 23d chapter of St. Matthew was intended to take a stumbling-block out of their way, and by the bold and fearless exposure that it made of the character and conduct of the Pharisees, to emancipate the people from that blind thralldom to their old religious leaders in which they had so long been held ? But the discourse had a wider scope. It was our Lord's last day in the Temple, his last time of openly addressing the people, the closing hour of his public ministry. This interest surrounds the words then spoken, that it was in them that his last farewell to the Temple, his farewell to his countrymen, was taken ; words not spoken for that audience only, words of solemn warning for his followers in all ages, for the men of every generation. Regarding it in this light, without entering into

any minute or consecutive exposition, let us offer one or two general reflections upon this discourse of our Saviour.

1. It tells us what it was that chiefly kindled against it the burning indignation of Jesus Christ. Against what are his terrible denunciations pointed? Not against either covert scepticism or open infidelity. The Sadducees are here comparatively overlooked. Not against those sins, to which one or other of the passions and instincts of our nature prompt when allowed unbridled sway. A very singular and instructive contrast shows itself throughout his ministry betwixt our Lord's treatment of that class of offences, and of the one which he here exposes. Compare, for instance, his treatment of the woman who had been a sinner, and of her to whom he said, 'Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more,' with his treatment of the haughty Pharisee, at whose table he met the one, and of the double-hearted men who brought to him the other. It is among those making the largest professions of piety, priding themselves on their social position and the outward respectability of their lives, that Jesus discovers the materials for the severest denunciations that ever came from his lips. He finds

these materials in that kind and form of religion which, under the guise of great fervor and zeal for the cause of God, beneath the large and brodered garment of a showy profession, gets ample room and opportunity for the indulgence of vanity and pride, the lordly, ambitious, despotic spirit; in that kind and form of religion that makes so much of the outward, the institutional, the ceremonial, so little of the moral, the spiritual, the practical,—which exalts the letter above the spirit of the divine commands, which, finding this old precept of Moses, ‘Thou shalt bind these commandments of the Lord for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as a frontlet between thine eyes,’ thought that this command was kept by having strips of parchment with passages of Scripture on them bound upon the forehead and the arm, and fancied that the broader the parchment srips, the more numerous the passages inscribed, the larger the honor and the service rendered unto God:—which, finding another old law of Moses, that no unclean animal should be eaten, strained every sort of drink carefully through a linen cloth, lest any gnat or the smallest unclean animalcule might be drunk:—which, meeting with the ancient Mosaic order that a tithe of all

produce should be offered to the Lord, was not content with presenting a tithe of the wheat, and the barley, and the oil, the common staple products of the land, but would give it of the mint, and the anise, and the cumin, the smallest garden fruits and flowers :—which invented nice casuistical distinctions among oaths, making out that some were binding, others not, some were sinful, others not ; which, notwithstanding all its punctilious attention to the minutiae of certain outward observances, all its laborious cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter, was full within of extortion and excess, —a very strange compound of very heterogeneous elements, distasteful to all true-hearted men, infinitely distasteful to our Lord and Master. We might have hoped that, with the departure of that old ritualism of Judaism, with the coming in of the simpler institute of Christianity, with the lessons and the life of our Lord himself before us, that the temptation to and the opportunity for such singular and such offensive developments of human nature would depart. But no ; the spirit of Pharisaism lies deep in that nature ;—deepest where the superstitious and devotional element is strong and the moral is comparatively weak, not peculiar

to certain times and places, or to be seen only in certain churches under the drapery of ecclesiastical ceremonialism kindred to that of the Jews. It is to be found everywhere, under all forms of religious observance ; where it has the least natural aliment making all the more of what it has,—nay more, as if soured by its meagre diet, nowhere will you see a more odious and repulsive growth of it than in those very churches which have stripped themselves the barest of all forms and ceremonies.

2. Let us notice the insidiousness and deceitfulness of that spirit of Pharisaism which in this discourse Christ so fully exposes and so heavily condemns. The men whom Christ had immediately in his eye, whose hollowness and falsity he dissects with so unsparing a hand, had a very different opinion of themselves from that which he expresses. They believed themselves to be really the most religious people in their own country,—in the world. There may have been a few of them utter and arrant hypocrites, who knew themselves to be mere pretenders, with whom all the show of devotion was intentionally and consciously assumed for selfish and sinister purposes. But we should err egregiously if we thought that such was the character

of the majority. They imagined themselves to be sincere, and it was that imagination which was at the bottom of their intense self-satisfaction, their eager and ostentatious displays. Self-deception went so far with them that they actually believed themselves to be the natural successors and representatives of the prophets and righteous men of the old economy. The memory of their martyred forefathers was so dear to them, that they built their tombs and garnished their sepulchres, and said to one another, 'If we had lived in those old times, we should not have been partakers with those who shed their blood.' Yet at this very time they are meditating the death of Jesus,—are about to imbrue their hands in the blood of God's own Son. Extraordinary instance, you may say, of self-deception. You would not think so if the eye of Omniscience were for a moment lent, and it was given to you to discern how many there are presently alive—busy, bustling, pretentious religionists, builders of prophets' tombs, garnishers of martyrs' sepulchres, the readiest to say, 'Had we lived in the days of these odious Pharisees, we had been no partakers in their guilt,'—who if subjected to the same kinds of test with the Pharisees,—these tests altered ac-

ording to the changes that the world since then has undergone—would do their deed over again—in the spirit, if not in the letter, would crucify Christ afresh. Among all the spirits that have ever entered into and taken possession of our nature, there is not one of such self-deceiving power as that of Pharisaism.

3. You have a striking instance brought before you in this discourse of a nation being reckoned with not individually but collectively. The generation in which Jesus lived had sins enough of its own to answer for. Had there stood against it but that one charge of having despised, rejected, crucified the Lord, it had been enough. But see how, in the spirit of sublime superiority to all selfish consideration, Jesus makes no mention here of the treatment given to himself. He looks backward, and lo! all the righteous blood that had been shed in the land lifts up its cry for vengeance! He looks backward, and lo! in the hand of the Great Judge the cup of wrath is seen getting fuller and fuller as the guilt of generation after generation is poured into it! He looks forward, and lo! the men of the generation then existing are beheld pouring the last drops into that cup, and by doing so, about to bring down its

whole contents upon their devoted heads! But in the brief prophecy of what remained still to be done ere the treasured wrath of heaven descended there is something altogether singular. It is not a bare foretelling of the future by a commissioned agent of heaven. The prophet here rises far above the rank of all who had gone before. He speaks as the prophets' King and Lord. A greater than all the prophets is here. 'Behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes.'* Christ's feet are upon the pavement of the earthly Temple, but he speaks as from the Throne of Heaven. Let those who deny the divinity of Jesus tell us with what propriety any mortal man,—any, even the greatest of the prophets, could have spoken as he here does. The indirect, the incidental way in which he speaks, deepens the impression of his divinity. A vision of judgment is to be revealed. As he reveals it, he almost unconsciously, as we might say, realizes his own position as the Judge. And assuming that he is so when he tells us of that generation being made to suffer as well for others' transgressions

* Matt. xxiii. 34.

as their own, what answer shall be given to those who would challenge the principle and rectitude of this procedure, but this, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' All the length that we can here go, is to point to the thousand instances in God's ordinary providence in which the sins of fathers are visited upon their children, and to the many instances of human legislation and international action grounded upon the principle that a nation is not a set of isolated unconnected units, but a continuous corporate body, capable of contracting an obligation, and incurring a guilt that survives the existing generation. We do not say that the exemplification of it elsewhere in the arrangement of the divine providence, or its embodiment by ourselves when we assume the office of administrator or judge, carries with it the explanation of such a procedure as that announced here by Jesus Christ. We do not say that we have light enough to offer any sufficient vindication of it ; but most assuredly we have not light enough to repudiate or condemn. Nay more, we are convinced that when the great mystery of God's dealings with mankind shall stand revealed in their eternal issues, it will be seen that our separate individual in-

terests, for weal or for woe, have been wisely and righteously interlapped with the merit and the guilt of others to a far larger extent than any of us are now prepared to believe.

4. In this discourse, a phase of the character of Christ, and in him of God, is set before us, from which we ought not to avert our eye. Christ's voice, as heard on earth, was not always one of gentleness and love. When occasion called for it, it could speak as the thunder speaks, in volumed terror. Never were severer epithets employed, never more terrible denunciations uttered, than those hurled at and heaped upon the heads of the Pharisees. Yet no mingling here of sinful human passion, of malice or revenge, no absence even of love. Has Jesus forgotten to be gracious? Are tenderness and compassion clean gone out of that most loving heart? We cannot believe so for a moment. Then let us believe that the deep, the strong, the burning indignation that breaks out here has a place and power of its own in the bosom our Lord, and dwells together in perfect harmony with the milder and gentler attributes of his nature. Lightning lurks amid the warm soft drops of the summer shower ; a consuming fire may come out of the very heart

of love. Christ is the world's great Saviour ; he is also the world's great Judge. It was as our Saviour he came down to this earth, and gentle and still indeed was the voice in which that office was discharged. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets ; but lest we should misinterpret, and imagine that his spirit was too soft ever to kindle into wrath, his hand too gentle to do other services than those of love, once and again, as here, he assumes the office of the Judge, and speaks with a startling sternness. He began his teaching on the mountainside of Galilee ; he closed it in the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem. Compare the two discourses—the Sermon on the Mount, this discourse in the Temple : the one begins with blessings, the other begins and ends with rebuke ; the one pours its benedictions over the heads of the faithful, the other its maledictions over the heads of the faithless ; the seven woes of the one confront the seven beatitudes of the other. Or take for contrast Christ's farewell to his friends, and his farewell to his enemies : the one composed of words of comfort, closing in that sublime intercessory prayer which he left behind him as a type or specimen of his advo-

cacy for us in the heavenly places ; the other composed throughout of terrible denunciations, types and preludes of those awful judgments which in his judicial character he shall pronounce and execute upon the finally impenitent. And what does all this teach us but that the religion of Jesus Christ has a twofold aspect ? It carries both the blessing and the curse in its bosom. If here it speaks peace, there it speaks terror ; if to some it has nothing but words of tenderness and encouragement, to others it has nothing but words of warning and of woe. It stands as the pillar-cloud stood between the Egyptians and the Israelites : with a side of glowing brightness and a side of overshadowing gloom. And yet, let us not fail to notice, that after all it is not in tones of wrath that the last accents of this farewell of our Lord to his enemies fall upon our ear. The fire of righteous indignation that burns within him cannot but go forth. As flash after flash of the lightning it falls upon the hypocrite and false devotee. But under that fire the inner heart of Jesus at last dissolves into tenderness. Pity, infinite pity, pours her quenching tears upon it, and with another look, and in altered tone, a look and tone in which the compassion of the God-

head reveals itself, he exclaims, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' 'I would, but ye would not.' The willingness is all with him, the unwillingness with us. May the very thought of this take our unwillingness away; that at the last our house be not left desolate, that it be no other than the home that he hath prepared for all who love him.

VIII.

THE WIDOW'S MITE—CERTAIN GREEKS DESIRE TO SEE JESUS.*

Tuesday.

HIS terrible denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees having been delivered, Jesus passes into a court of the Temple, the innermost to which they were admitted, called therefore the Court of the Women. On one side of this court stood the thirteen large chests, with openings shaped like trumpets, into which the free-will offerings of the people were thrown. Over against them Jesus seats himself, watching the passers-by. He sees many rich approach, and throw in, perhaps ostentatiously, their large contributions, but he does not make any comment on their gifts. At last, however, a poor woman approaches the place of deposit. Modestly, timidly, almost furtively, as if

* Mark xii. 41-44 ; Luke xxi. 1-4 ; John xii. 20-36.

ashamed of being seen, and hiding what she gives, as all too small for public notice, she casts her farthing in, and is in haste to depart. See how the eye of the watcher fastens upon this woman. She is retreating in haste to hide herself in the crowd without, but she must not go till other eyes than those of Jesus have also been turned upon her. 'He calls to him his disciples,' he bids them mark her well, and as their eyes are all upon her, he says to them, 'Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than they all.'

How many were there in Jerusalem who, if their attention had been directed to the poor widow's act, and it had been told them that in casting these two mites she had cast in her all, would have condemned that act! What was cast into the treasury went either to the poor or to the priests, to relief of the indigent or the upholding of the worship of the Temple. But were there many poorer in all the city than the poor widow herself? Should she not have kept the little which she had for the relieving of her own wants? As to the priests and the Temple, a large enough provision was made for them by public and private charity, without her being asked to add her trifling

contribution. Who could tell, when it came into their hands, what these well-fed priests would do with her two mites? And even if she had a better security that her donation would be well applied, what need was there to give what was so much to her and what was so little to them? How many sayings of this kind might her act have called forth! and for one that might have praised, probably there would have been ten who would have condemned. But other eyes than those of a mere earthly prudence are on her, and another and very different sentence than one of condemnation is passed. Broad and deep in that poor widow's heart had the love of the God who was worshipped within that Temple been shed. There, by the post of these gates, she had often waited and worshipped, and there, in her hours of sorrow, in that worship her burdened spirit had got relief. She would answer to the call, that she knew that the Lord of that Temple had given to aid in the maintenance of its services. It was a debt of gratitude that she owed; it was a privilege to take any share in such a work. True, it was but the veriest trifle that she could afford; but it was willingly and gladly given. She would not have liked that

any of those rich people, who were throwing in their silver and their gold as they went by, had seen her two mites drop out of her fingers. But there were eyes from which she could not hide them; and little as she thought of it, there was one across the court sitting in judgment upon her, who not only approved her deed, but elevated her above all the donors of the day. She is not only the greatest giver of them all, she has cast in more than they all together,—more, not in money value, but in moral worth. And what else, by giving such world-wide circulation to this her act, and this his sentence on it, did Jesus mean, than to give a world-wide circulation to the truth, that in his sight, in his Father's sight, it is the motive which gives its true character to the act; that greatness in his estimate of things consists not in the doing of great acts that every eye must see, and that every tongue may be ready to praise, but in doing what may be little things,—so small that they shall escape all human notice, and so insignificant that there may be none to think them worthy of any praise; but doing them in a great spirit, from a great and noble and holy end? He is not the largest giver who, out of his abundance, and from many

mixed motives, gives to this charity or to that, but he who, impelled by the pure love of God, and the desire to help on a good object, gives in largest relative proportion out of the surplus that remains to him after his own and his family's wants have been provided for.

We do not know the circumstances otherwise of this poor widow. Let us assume that these two mites were all she had after her personal wants had been satisfied. Let us assume that, slender as her income may have been, yet, like all the poor in the land of Israel, she had some such slender income upon which she could count. We cannot believe that if by casting these two mites in the treasury she actually made herself a pauper, with nothing thereafter but the casual and uncertain charity of others to depend on, that our Lord would have approved of the act. Assuming, then, that it was all, in the sense of being her all that was left after the provision of her own immediate wants, that she bestowed upon the Temple treasury ; assuming also that all those rich people who went before and who followed her, in the first instance appropriated of their incomes what was needful to maintain them in the different grades of society in which they

respectively were placed ; let us ask ourselves,—if the scale of giving on which she acted had been universally adopted, what would the revenue of that Temple have been ? We imagine that the woman had no family ; we imagine that she had none naturally claiming a provision at her hands ; we imagine that that treasury of the Temple was the one great channel through which her charity flowed. It would be wrong indeed in such a state of things as that in the midst of which our lot is cast, to turn her act into a precedent,—for any one object of Christian or common charity, to claim the entire surplus that any one, rich or poor, among us may possess. But surely, all due limitations and exceptions made, there is something in the example thus held out which it becomes us to imitate ; and we shall miss at least one great lesson which it gives if we fail to perceive how right a thing it is that this burden of giving should be equally and proportionally borne ; knowing that our gifts are all accepted, not according to what a man hath not, but according to what every man has. The lesson which, of all others, and in all departments of benevolent effort, we most need to have impressed on us—is the duty of shar-

ing honorably and equally every burden that Christianity imposes.

The time and circumstances under which the approving verdict was passed upon the widow's offering enhance its interest. Woe after woe, in tones of terrible impressiveness, have pealed like volleyed thunder over the heads of his adversaries, and are still echoing in the courts of the Temple. As if to show how quickly and fully the strong emotions of righteous indignation have passed out of his breast, he sits quietly down in the attitude of an unoccupied observer, all trace of anger gone from his countenance, all tones of anger from his voice, and asks his disciples to notice the poor widow's act.

But there was another and still more interesting exhibition of the state of our Lord's thoughts and feelings as he took his farewell of the Temple. It is the high prerogative of genius to be able vividly to realize and represent the thoughts, and sentiments, and words appropriate to all kinds of characters, in all varieties of positions. Who that has read the pages of our great English dramatist has not remarked how true to nature each representation is, whether it be monarch on the throne or clown in the

closet, statesman, warrior, prelate, or peasant that appears, and speaks, and acts? It is by the exercise of this great faculty that the personages and events of the past are reproduced and set forth before our eye. There is one Being, however, who appeared upon the stage of time, who stands beyond the reach of this faculty; for, be his genius what it may, who shall put himself in the place, or think the thoughts, or enter into the emotions of the Son of God, as he passed through his earthly sojourn? And yet how natural the desire to know the thoughts awakened in his mind, the emotions kindled in his heart, by the incidents through which he passed, the individuals with whom he was thrown into contact? Here, however, imagination is at fault. Conscious of its incapacity, it reverently withdraws from the attempt either to conceive or to express how Jesus was affected by the varying events of his earthly pilgrimage. We cannot, dare not, go here beyond what is revealed. And that is but little. No reader of the Gospels can fail to have noticed how seldom it is that Christ gives us any glimpse of what was passing in the interior of his own spirit. With all the greater interest do we ponder over the few occasions in which

the mantle that was ordinarily so closely drawn round its inner shrine is partially uplifted. Such is the interest which attaches to that passage of his life which now comes under our review.

As Jesus is sitting over against the treasury, Andrew and Philip come and tell him that in the outer court of the Gentiles certain Greeks are standing, who have expressed a strong desire to see him. Born and brought up as heathen men, they had been so far convinced of the superiority of the Jewish faith, that they were in the habit of coming up to Jerusalem to worship there the one living and true God. Whether they had seen or heard much or anything of Jesus before this time, what it was which inspired them with such a strong desire to see him now, we do not know. This may have been their first visit to Jerusalem. Their earliest knowledge of Christ may have been derived from what they had witnessed within the last few days. They must have heard of the raising of Lazarus and the many miracles which had previously been wrought. They must have seen our Lord's triumphal entry into the city, and noticed how the whole community had been moved. The cleansing of the Temple must

have made a deep impression on their minds. It was the court of the Gentiles, the very part of the Temple appropriated to the use of that class to which they belonged, which Jesus had sought to cleanse from its impurities and profanations. Let us imagine that those devout Greeks had themselves been scandalized by seeing the place consecrated to worship turned into a common market ground, by seeing the priesthood more eager to make money than to win Gentiles to their faith. Here, however, is one man, a Jew, animated by something like the right spirit, who drives out these buyers and sellers, whose aim and effort is that this place be made what it was meant to be, a house of prayer for all nations. Who can this Jesus be? He calls the Temple his own house. He speaks of God as his own Father. The chief priests and rulers are angry at him ; have even put a price upon his head ; have given orders that if any man knew where he was, he should tell, in order that he might be taken and put to death. Yet he walks openly in the midst ; the people gaze on him with wonder ; the very children hail him with hosannas as the Son of David. Who, those strangers ask again, can this Jesus be? In their curiosity they come to Philip, a Ga-

lilean, a native of Bethsaida, one who knows their language, with whom they may have had some previous acquaintance, or they come to him because he is the one nearest them at the time, with whom they can most readily communicate, and they say to him : ' Sir, we would see Jesus.' Philip tells Andrew ; Philip and Andrew, the Greeks in all likelihood following them, tell Jesus. He has many around him, when this message is conveyed to him, and the disciples and the Greeks stand waiting the result. He gives no direct or immediate answer. He stands a moment, lost in thought, and then breaks out into expressions, vague and dark enough to those who listened to them at the time, yet full of the richest meaning, and conveying, too, though neither the Greeks nor the disciples nor any of those around may have seen how it was so, one of the best answers to the request which had just been made.

To understand this, let us remember that Jesus knew from the beginning what was to be the broad issue of his mission to this earth. The words of the Father, spoken of old by the prophet, were familiar to his ear : ' It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to restore the preserved of Israel. I will give thee

to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth: a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of my people Israel.' Knowing this, familiar with this from the beginning as the end and object of his incarnation, one cannot help believing that the narrowness of the bounds within which his personal ministry was confined, and the smallness of the results which, during its continuance, that ministry realized, were often as a heavy burden pressing upon the Redeemer's spirit. As a son, indeed, he learned obedience; he willingly submitted to the restraints laid on him; he cheerfully conformed to the will of Him that sent him, and expended his personal labors upon the lost sheep of the house of Israel,—but not without many an inward thought of the joy set before him, of the harvest yet to be gathered in, of the glory yet to be revealed,—thoughts kept buried in his heart, not at first to be uttered, for who could understand or sympathize? But here, at last, on the very eve of his agony and death, these Greeks, these Gentiles, come desiring to see him. He hails them as the representatives of the vast community to which they belong. In their coming to him he sees

the first fruits of that rich harvest which the world in all its borders was to yield. The great future of the gospel times and ages, hidden from all others, brightens into its full glory before his eye. The time, he knows, is near,—he takes this very message from these Greeks, as the token of its approach,—when the mystery shall be revealed, and the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile shall be broken down, wide over all the earth the glad tidings of salvation in his name go forth, and men of all peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kindreds be gathered into that one fold, of which he is to be the Shepherd. But between the present and this great result there lay, now very near at-hand, his own sufferings and death,—the lifting of him upon that cross which is to serve as the great means of gathering all men unto him.

Connecting thus, as was most natural, the petition of the Greeks with the gathering in of the Gentiles, and that gathering in with his own approaching death, Jesus answered and said: “The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth

forth much fruit." Take a single pickle of seed-corn : there dwells within it the mysterious principle of life,—the gift of the Creator, that no man can bestow. Keep it above the ground, preserve it carefully from the touch of death and of corruption, it may abide for years, retaining its own vitality ; but it so abides in solitary unfruitfulness—no life comes out of its life. Bury it, however, beneath the sod ; let it pass down into what becomes to it the realm of corruption and of death ; let it rot and die there, then from out that death the new life cometh—fresh, abounding, multiplying life. So it is, and so only, that it bringeth forth much fruit. And of the world's great spiritual harvest Jesus is the one seed-corn. He had the life in himself, and might have kept it for ever there. But to turn it into the source of life to others he too must obey the law of life, propagating itself and spreading abroad through death. He too must die, that by dying he may bring forth much fruit.

The death of the Redeemer stands by itself ; in a manner peculiar to itself the source of spiritual life to all united to him by faith. And yet there is a sense, and that a most real and important one, in which what was true of

the head is true also of all the members. They too must come under the operation of the great principle and law which brings life out of death. They too must die, as he their Saviour died ; must take up their cross in turn, and in self-denial and self-sacrifice bear it ; they must have a fellowship with his sufferings ; be planted in the likeness of his death ; be crucified with Christ ; must fill up what remains of his sufferings for his body the Church. "For," said Jesus, immediately after having spoken of his own death and its great issues, "he that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." "If any man serve me"—be willing to become like-minded, like-hearted with me, look to my death as not only the fountainhead of his own spiritual life, but the model after which the whole temper, frame, and spirit of his being is to be moulded, then, added Jesus,—“let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be ; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” In the quick survey of the future that now engages the Saviour’s thoughts, he sees beyond his death, realizes his position as exalted to the Father’s right hand in the heavenly places—

the shame and the dishonor, the buffeting and the scourging, the agony and the dying, exchanged for the glory he had with the Father before the world was. A kindred elevation and like honors awaited all who took up their cross daily, and in self-denial and self-sacrifice bore it ; sufferers with him here, they would be glorified with him hereafter.

Such as I have thus tried to trace it was the current of thought running through the first utterances of Jesus, given in answer to the announcement that certain Greeks stood without, desiring to see him. But now a sudden change comes over the spirit of the Redeemer. His eye closes on the crowd around ; he ceases to think of, to speak with man ; he is alone with the Father. A dark cloud descends and wraps him in its folds ; he fears as he enters into this cloud. From the midst of its thick darkness a trembling agitated voice is heard telling of a spirit sorely troubled within. Those of you who have watched by the bed of the dying must often have noticed how, as the great event drew near, foreshadowings of it came at measured intervals—a struggle, a faintness, a pallor so like the last that you held your breath as thinking that the spirit was about to pass.

Death often throws such shadows of itself before, and the greatest of all deaths, the death of the Son of God, was also thus prefigured. The agony of the garden, what was it? It was but the spiritual anguish of the cross let down beforehand upon the soul of the Redeemer. The inward agony that wrung from the lips of the dying Jesus the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was the same in source, in character, in object, with that which forced the thrice repeated prayer, "Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And the closing utterance of Gethsemane, "Not my will, O God; thy will be done," is it not a softened echo of the last and loud triumphant exclamations, "It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit?" Still more striking, however, is the likeness between what took place visibly, audibly here within the Temple, and what happened two days afterwards in the solitude of the garden. The correspondence is too close to be overlooked. You have in each case the struggle, the prayer, the triumph, following each other in the same order. "My soul," said Jesus to the three disciples as he passed into the interior of the garden, "is exceeding sor-

rowful, even unto death." "Now," in the hearing of the company within the Temple he said, "Now is my soul troubled." "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," is the prayer in the one case; "Father, save me from this hour," the prayer in the other. And the conflict is hushed, and the troubled spirit sinks to rest in the one case, saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;" and in the other, "But for this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name."

"Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Twice before—at the Baptism in the Jordan, and the Transfiguration on the Mount—the same voice had been heard. But this third instance has more of publicity, if not of solemnity, attending it. At the baptism there were few present, and we may reasonably doubt whether any but John and Jesus saw the descending dove, and heard the voice from heaven. At the Transfiguration there were present only the chosen three; but here, in the Temple, before a listening crowd, in answer to a public and solemn appeal, this voice gives its crowning accrediting testimony.

This testimony given, the cloud disperses, the divine colloquy between the Son and the Father ceases. Christ's thoughts return to earth, to flow once more along the channel into which the application of the Greeks had led them. First he turns aside for a moment to correct the misapprehension of some of the spectators. It had been here as it was on the occasion of Paul's conversion on his way to Damascus. Some had heard but a confused noise, and would have it that it was nothing more than a common peal of thunder that had sounded above their heads; others had made out that it was a voice, but not catching the words, or not entering into their meaning, would have it that it was an angel that in some unknown tongue had been addressing him. Jesus tells them that it was indeed a voice which they had heard, and that it had spoken not so much on his account as on theirs. Then, taking up once more the idea which runs as a connecting link through the whole of this passage, that the time had come for the completion of his great work, and the gathering up of its fruits, his eye glances over the whole realm of heathendom; he sees that vast domain given over to the great usurper, the

prince of this world, the spirit of unrighteousness sitting in the high places, and exercising an unhallowed supremacy. The time had come, however, for a world given over to wickedness to be judged, and for the usurper, who had so long held dominion over it, to be cast out. But how, and by what instrument? Not by might nor by power; not by bolts of vengeance flung at the ungodly; not by the hand of violence laid upon the usurper, and he dragged off with chains of iron binding him; no, but by another power mightier than his, drawing men away from him, dissolving their allegiance to him, linking them in love to God. "And I," said Jesus, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

Such, as foreseen and pre-announced by our Lord himself, was to be the effect of his crucifixion. It was to clothe him with a power over the spirits of men, unlimited in its range, omnipotent in its influence, designed and fitted to exert its benignant sway as widely as the human family is scattered. From the time that he was lifted up, by his cross, its triumphs and its attractions, by all that it so willingly holds out for their acceptance and for their imitation, Jesus has been bringing all men to

him,—men of every age, of every country, of every character, of every condition ; the wise and the simple, the rich and the poor, the honored and the despised, Jews, Grecks, Barbarians, Scythians, bond and free. He puts this cross into our hands ; he bids us lift it up, he bids us carry it abroad. Ours the outward work of letting all men know and see who it was that died for them on Calvary, and what it was that by dying for them he has done. His the inward power to work upon the heart, and by that charm which neither space nor time can ever weaken, to win it to peace, to love, to holiness, to **heaven**.

IX.

THE PROPHECIES OF THE MOUNT.*

Tuesday.

THE stormy collision between Christ and the chief priests at length was over. Jesus, calling the twelve around him, left that court of the Temple in which the conflict had been carried on, not as one defeated or driven away by his adversaries, but clearly and avowedly as the victor. It looks, from the two incidents which followed, as if Jesus, his public teaching in the Temple over, lingered yet a little while reluctant to take what he knew would be his last sight of its sacred interior. At last, however, sadly and slowly he departs. There was perhaps something marked and noticeable in the earnest looks Jesus was bestowing on the buildings. There had certainly been much in what they had just seen and heard to excite

* Matt. xxiv., xxv. ; Mark xiii. ; Luke xxi. 5-36.

the attention of his disciples. Those last words of his address to the Pharisees ring heavily in their ears,—“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” What house is to be left so desolate? Is it this very Temple in which they stand? What kind of desolation is to overtake that house? Is it indeed, as some words of their Master, spoken long before this time, might seem to imply, to be destroyed? A dark foreboding of some awful catastrophe hanging over that sacred pile is upon their spirits; and one of them, giving vague expression to the common feeling, and with some dim hope that something further, clearer, may be told, said, “Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” “See ye not,” is our Lord’s reply, “all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Distinct and unambiguous announcement! One cloud of obscurity at least is rolled away. The solid, stately, sumptuous fabric on which all their eyes are fastened is to perish, from its very foundation to be over-

turned. But though this fact be thus made certain, how many questions as to the time, the manner, the causes, the consequences of it, would at once arise to trouble the disciples' mind. Their Master, however, is already on his way to the gate which leads out to Bethany, and they follow. Silent all and thoughtful they follow him ; they descend into the valley of Jehoshaphat, cross the Kedron, begin the ascent of Olivet, have reached a height which commands the city, where Jesus pauses and sits down,—as that accurate narrator Mark informs us, “over against the Temple.” It must have been near the very spot where, two or three days before, Jesus had beheld the city and wept over it, and through his tears had seen that sad vision of Jerusalem beleaguered, and her enemies casting a trench around her, and compassing her about, and keeping her on every side, and laying her even with the ground, and leaving not one stone upon another. As Jesus and his disciples sat down upon the ridge of Olivet, the eyes of all would rest upon the sumptuous edifice before them there, across the valley, glowing now beneath the beams of the setting sun. The quiet spot, the evening hour, the serene attitude, his

words so lately spoken, all conspire to draw the disciples' thoughts upon the dark and doubtful future. Gently approaching him, Peter and James and John and Andrew put to Christ the question, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

It is of the utmost importance, as throwing light upon the whole structure and meaning of Christ's answer, that we look into the inquiry to which it was a response. Taking up that inquiry with the information which we now possess, we should say that it referred to three distinct and separate events:—(1.) The destruction of the Temple; (2.) The coming of Christ; (3.) The end of the world. But the men who made that inquiry had no clear idea of these three events being distinct and separate from each other. They had heard their Master, and that very recently, speak of his impending sufferings and death, and of another coming of the Son of Man, when he should be revealed in his glory. They heard him say, 'Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.' What a mass of difficulties was here for these

men with their existing beliefs to unravel! Christ's coming to his kingdom they had always looked forward to as the issue speedily to be realized, when he should ascend the throne of Israel and rule upon the earth as earth's acknowledged sovereign. But somehow, between them and that issue were interposed those sufferings and that death the object of which they could not comprehend. They had always associated Christ's coming to his kingdom with the elevation of their country to the first place among the nations, and the restoring and purifying of their great sanctuary at Jerusalem ; but now Jesus speaks of coming not to restore but to destroy. He tells them of a time when of all those great buildings of the Temple not one stone should be left upon another. Was that to be at the time of his coming, and was the time of his coming to be the end of the world? Imagining that it must be so, and yet unable to see how it could be so, incapable of dissociating the three events, yet unable to harmonize what had been said about each, they come with all their obscurity and confusion of thought to Jesus, and they say to him, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?'

Look now at the reply of Jesus to this question, as given in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew, and ask yourselves how far did Jesus go in clearing away the doubts or misapprehensions which the complex question put to him involved. Did he at once, clearly and unambiguously, inform his disciples that the destruction of Jerusalem was at hand? that it would happen within the lifetime of men then living? Did he, separating between different future comings of his, some figurative, some personal, tell them that it was to his first figurative coming he had referred, when he said that there were some of those then standing before them who should witness it? Did he proceed to separate by a long interval of many centuries the coming to judge Jerusalem, from his coming to avenge his own elect, to gather them from the four winds of heaven, and set up his kingdom upon the earth? or did he separate again that personal advent at the beginning of the millennium, from the day of the world's final judgment, and the passing away of these heavens and this earth? So far from this, the prophetic discourse of our Lord is studiously and purposely so framed, that with no other guidance than that which itself affords, we still

might confound, as the disciples confounded, the three advents of our Lord. With the fulfillment of the first part in our hands, as an event long since gone by, we are able to mark the separating line which divides the first advent of Christ, that day of judgment of the Lord, from all others that are to follow. Had we, however, stood where the apostles did, had we had this great comprehensive draft or sketch of the future held up to our eyes, as it was to theirs, would it have been possible to discern even that dividing line? For how is this prophetic picture framed? Behind a foreground filled with signs and tokens of impending woes, there rises as the first summit of a mountain range the Lord's coming to visit Jerusalem in his anger; then, right over that summit, almost on the same level, but dimmer, appearing to the eye quite close to it,—the intervening valley quite hid from sight—another summit is beheld, another judgment-advent of the Lord, a second, and, as many believe even farther back, yet a third. What seems, however, especially to perplex the eye as it rests on this prophetic picture is not only that events are brought close together which may be—some of which we now know are—actually distant

from each other by many centuries ; not only are marks and tokens of these intervening spaces wanting here, not only are all the events of the one class described in the same way, painted in the same colors, but each is used as typical of those which come behind, described accordingly in terms which appear to belong to its successor rather than to itself ; and so it is that many readers have felt it to be impossible to determine of many of the sayings of the discourse, whether they are to be applied to the first or second or third advent of Christ.

With these general observations, let us take up the discourse itself. It will be found that it divides itself into three parts, which on the whole correspond to the three inquiries which are virtually involved in the question of the disciples ; the first part, from the beginning of the 24th chapter to its 29th verse, being occupied with the destruction of Jerusalem ; the second, from the 69th verse of the 24th chapter to the 30th verse of the 25th chapter, being occupied with the Lord's advent to establish and set up his kingdom upon the earth ; and the third, from the 31st verse to the end of the 25th chapter, occupied with the final judgment and the end of the world. I shall have a word or two

to say hereafter as to whether we should distinguish the second of these sections in any way from the third ; whether there shall be any other future coming of Christ besides the one when he shall come to close the present order of things. Meanwhile let us turn our thoughts to that portion, the easiest certainly to be understood, which sets forth the coming siege and ruin of the holy city. When shall these things be ? when shall Jerusalem be destroyed ? Jesus does not satisfy the curiosity that had respect alone to the date of the event, which would like to know how many years it would be till the ruin of their ancient city was accomplished, but he gives them, not one, but many signals of its approach. False Christs were to arise, there were to be wars and rumors of wars, and earthquakes, in divers places, and famine and pestilence, and persecution of themselves. These, however, were to be but the beginning of sorrows ; they were to regard them as so many tokens that the end was drawing on. The ten verses from the 4th to the 14th are occupied with the detail of these. All who have access to the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, can easily satisfy themselves how fully and accurately all these tokens were veri-

fied during the years which lay between the ascension of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Without referring to historic details, let me rather ask you to notice how Christ subordinates the prophetic intimations which he makes to the instructions, warnings, consolations with which he accompanies them. Does he speak of false Christs appearing? he prefaces that prophecy by saying, 'Take heed that no man deceive you.' Does he speak of coming wars and rumors of wars? he adds, 'See that ye be not troubled.' Does he detail the sufferings to which his own followers during that interval are to be exposed? he follows it up by the assurance that he who shall endure to the end shall be saved. It was not so much to prove his prophetic power, not so much to gratify their desire that some preintimation of the approaching event should be given them as to forewarn and forearm against the spiritual dangers to which they were exposed, that Jesus entered on these details.

Even here, however, in the first section—whose reference to the proximate event of the destruction of Jerusalem no one can doubt—we have instances of that double sense of the

Lord's sayings, their applying to the incident more immediately alluded to, yet carrying along with them an ulterior reference to the future and kindred one with which in the broad delineation it is conjoined. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved;' the primary signification here is, that he who, through all these seductive influences of false prophets, through all these wars and rumors of wars, through all these fiery trials of persecution, should hold fast his fidelity, would be delivered from that destruction which was to descend upon Jerusalem; the secondary signification, one which extends to every period of the Church, and to every one who abideth faithful unto death, holds out in promise, the greater, the spiritual, the everlasting salvation. Again, the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached for a witness unto all nations. In their primary sense these words received their first fulfillment anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem. 'Their sound,' says Paul, speaking of the first missionaries of the cross, 'went unto all the earth, their words unto the ends of the world.' In another epistle, he speaks of the Gospel which the Colossians had heard, as preached to every creature which is under heaven. But in a wider and more strictly

literal sense, before the final advent which the first symbolizes, there was to be a diffusion over all the earth of the knowledge of Christ,—the two signs here given of Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem, a general apostasy, the love of many waxing cold, and a widespread dissemination of the truth, being, as we know from the other parts of the discourse, the very signs by which the second advent of our Lord is to be preceded.

But Jesus not only mentions certain signals by whose appearance they might be admonished that the great catastrophe was drawing on, he gives a token by which they might know that it was at the very door. He does this in order to dictate the course which they should then take in order to provide for their safety. 'When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, in the holy place,' etc. In St. Luke's Gospel it stands, 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies.' When the two came into conjunction,—the outward sign of the city being compassed about with armies,—the inward one of some flagrant desecration of the Holy Place within the Temple being perpetrated,—they were to betake them-

selves to instant flight. And so great was the expedition they were to use, that he who was on the house-top was not to wait to come down by the inner stair to take anything out of the house, but, escaping even as he was, was to descend at once by the outer flight of stairs, which, in Jewish houses, led from the house-top to the street, and fly as for his life. We cannot now say decisively what the abomination of desolation was ; doubtless it was recognized by those for whose benefit Christ's words were spoken. We know, however, that two years before the city was invested by Vespasian, a Roman army, under Cestius Gallus, approached and invested it. It strangely enough happened that as Titus surprised the city at the time of the Passover, Cestius surprised it at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, when all the male population of Judea was collected in the capital. As there can be little doubt that the Hebrew converts to Christianity continued to observe the greater ceremonies of their ancient faith up to the time of the fall of Jerusalem, they too would be there along with the rest. They would see Jerusalem compassed with armies, and when, coincident with this, there was some desecration of

the Holy Place, they would know that the time for their flight had come. The siege by Cestius was sent as a warning to them, as the after siege was sent as a punishment to their unbelieving countrymen. It occurred in the month of October, one of the mildest in the Jewish year. Their flight, therefore, was not in the winter. It has been proved that the day on which Cestius unexpectedly, and in a panic which never could be accounted for, suddenly called off his troops, and entirely retreated from the city, was a Tuesday. Their flight, therefore, was not upon the Sabbath. Our Saviour's direction that they should pray that neither of these two things should happen to them, what was it but a prayer on his part that they should be exposed to neither of these calamities in their flight?—a prayer which in mercy was granted.

‘For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.’* The history of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is a dark picture of horrors, illumined by most extraordinary displays of heroism. I do not know

* Matt. xxiv. 21.

whether we are to receive the words of Jesus in describing it as if they were to be exactly and literally verified, or whether we are to take them, as we must take so many declarations of Holy Writ, as being true not so much in the letter as in the spirit. Certainly, however, neither before nor since have we read of so many men—upwards, Josephus tells us, of a million—perishing within a single city during its siege. Nor can a parallel easily be found to some of the horrible incidents realized within those beleaguered walls. Take, for instance, the description given by Dean Milman of the effects of famine. I quote the passage, as containing not merely a fulfillment of this prophecy of Christ, but of another and still earlier prophecy of Moses :

‘ Every kind feeling, love, respect, natural affection, were extinct through the all-absorbing want. Wives would snatch the last morsel from husbands, children from parents, mothers from children.... If a house was closed, they supposed that eating was going on, and they burst in and squeezed the crumbs from the mouths and throats of those who were swallowing them. Old men were scourged till they surrendered the food to

which their hands clung desperately, and even were dragged about by the hair till they gave up what they had. Children were seized as they hung upon the miserable morsels they had got, whirled around and dashed upon the pavement. Tortures which cannot be related with decency were employed against those who had a loaf or a handful of barley. . . . The very dead were searched as though they might conceal some scrap of food. The most loathsome and disgusting food was sold at an enormous price. They gnawed their belts, shoes, and even the leathern coats of their shields. Chopped hay and shoots of trees sold at high prices. Yet what were all these horrors to that which followed? There was a woman of Peræa, from the village of Bethzob, Mary the daughter of Eleazer. She possessed considerable wealth when she took refuge in the city. Day after day she had been plundered by the robbers whom she had provoked by her bitter imprecations. No one, however, would mercifully put an end to her misery, and, her mind maddened with wrong, her body preyed upon by famine, she wildly resolved on an expedient which might gratify at once her vengeance and her hunger. She had an infant that was vainly

endeavoring to obtain some moisture from her dry bosom. She seized it, cooked it, ate one half and set the other half aside. The smoke and smell of food quickly reached the robbers ; they forced her door, and with horrible threats commanded her to give up what she had been feasting on. She replied with horrible indifference that she had carefully reserved for her good friends a part of her meal. She uncovered the remains of her child. The savage men stood speechless, at which she cried out with a shrill voice, " Eat, for I have eaten ; be not more delicate than a woman, more tender-hearted than a mother, or if ye are too religious to touch such food, I have eaten half already, leave me the rest." They retired pale, and trembling with horror. The story spread rapidly through the city, and reached the Roman camp, where it was first heard with incredulity, afterwards with the deepest commiseration. How dreadfully must the words of Moses have forced themselves upon the minds of all those Jews who were not entirely unread in their holy writings : " The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her

bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear ; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly, in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates."

Such were the horrors from witnessing and sharing in which it was the benevolent intention of our Lord, by these prophecies, warnings, and directions, to shield the faithful few who should bear his name and profess his religion in the midst of their unbelieving countrymen. The care and foresight of their divine Master thus placed them on an eminence whence they might discern beforehand the gathering of the great storm, might quietly watch its gradual advances, and ere it burst upon their heads find safety in a timely flight. Nor was the solicitude of the Saviour expressed in vain. It has been a tradition of the Church from the earliest ages that not a single Christian Jew perished in the siege of Jerusalem. While we turn therefore to this discourse of our Redeemer, as presenting so striking a monument of his prescience, we turn to it with still greater pleasure as presenting a monument of

that affectionate, foreseeing, providing love he bears to all his faithful followers. Neither shall any of these his little ones perish ; for them too, when straits and dangers press them round, the way of escape shall be opened. They shall lift up their eyes to the hills, whence cometh their aid. They shall dwell on high, and their place of defence shall be the munition of rocks.

X.

THE PROPHECIES OF THE MOUNT.*

Tuesday.

‘TELL us,’ said his disciples to Jesus as they sat with him on the mount, ‘when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?’ Imagining that they would be nearly, if not altogether contemporaneous, they mixed up all the three events: the destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of Christ in his kingdom and glory, and the end of the world. How easy it had been for Christ to have corrected their errors both as to events and dates, to have told them plainly and explicitly that the destruction of Jerusalem was to precede by many centuries his second coming and the end of the world. Instead of this he leaves their errors uncorrected, allows the confusion that

* Matt. xxiv. 29-44 ; Mark xiii. 25-37 ; Luke xxi. 25-36.

was in their minds to remain. Nay more, in his reply he so speaks of his coming to judge the world as to make it impossible for his disciples at the time, and in the position they then occupied, to perceive that more than one such coming on his part was spoken of. With the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem behind us as an event long since gone by, we can understand the first part of our Lord's prophetic discourse delivered upon this occasion, and give to it its obvious and only possible application, by separating that first coming of Christ from all other after advents. But we stand to the remainder of the discourse very much in the same position in which the disciples at first stood to the whole of it. And there is a question about that remainder which we now, I apprehend, are as little able yet to solve as the disciples upon Mount Olivet were able to conclude, from what Christ then said, that the destruction of Jerusalem was nigh at hand, but that an interval of centuries stretched out between it and the next great coming of their Lord.

The question to which I refer is this : Is there indicated in the yet unfulfilled part of this prophecy a middle coming of Christ,—to be distin-

guished, on the one hand, from his coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to be equally distinguished, on the other, from his coming at the close of the present economy of things to judge the world? Many of our ablest expositors of Holy Writ believe that not only are traces to be discovered here of such an intermediate advent ushering in the millennial reign, but that you cannot read this discourse consecutively and intelligently without discerning and acknowledging it. Let me refer to one or two of the proofs which this portion of Scripture, when compared with other parts of the prophetic writings, is supposed to supply in evidence of a coming of Christ anterior to and quite separate from his final coming to judge the world. In the 29th verse of the 24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, certain premonitory signals of an advent of the Lord are given. The sun is to be darkened, the moon is not to give her light, the stars are to fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens are to be shaken. The advocates of the personal and premillennial advent of our Lord think they can demonstrate that, according to the structure and style of language adopted in the prophetic Scriptures, these are symbolic descriptions of great commotions,

changes, and revolutions, political and ecclesiastical, which are to happen on the earth. Other Scriptures about which there is less ambiguity of meaning represent these as preceding the setting up of the visible, the millennial kingdom of our Lord on earth, an event carefully to be distinguished from the final judgment advent. As the national and religious catastrophes here symbolized are spoken of in those other passages as taking place at some intermediate point along the line that stretches out into the future, and not at nor immediately near the end of that line, so it is affirmed and believed that the coming of the Lord spoken of in the 30th, 31st, and immediately following verses of the 24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, connected as it is with these catastrophes as its immediate precursors, cannot be the one with which the present state of things is finally to be wound up.

Again, this coming of the Lord is said to be for the purpose, not of gathering all nations before him, but of gathering his own elect out of all the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. In this gathering two are to be working in one field—the one is to be taken, the other left; two are to be

grinding at one mill—the one is to be taken, the other left. The field then and the one reaper, the mill and the one grinder, are they not to be left, it is asked, as they were before? and is not this a description that applies far more naturally and truthfully to such a separation as would take place at the erection of the millennial kingdom than to the separation of the judgment-day?

It is admitted that these and all the other like traces to be met here of a distinction between the second and third advents of our Lord are obscure; but then we are reminded that this whole prophecy is constructed upon the principle of so blending together the events that it covers, and making them so overlap and run into one another, that a broader and more marked line of separation is not to be looked for. It is difficult for eyes untrained to the survey of mountainous districts to detect the line that separates a distant range of hills from a higher one lying immediately behind it. As difficult, it is alleged, for an eye unpractised in the survey of the perspective of prophecy, as presented in the pages of the Bible, to detect that line which separates the second from the third coming of our Lord. Nevertheless, the

quick-sighted and well-trained eye may in both cases be satisfied that it is a double and not a single object that is before it. In justice, besides, to the advocates of the premillennial advent, it must be added that the Scripture now before us is not the one upon which they rely as supplying anything like distinct or positive proof of such an advent. It would certainly need something much more definite than anything which meets us here to warrant the belief that such an advent is approaching. But if elsewhere in the Bible such positive proof exists, then it is alleged that the rendering of this prophetic discourse which represents it as portraying in regular sequence three judgment-comings of the Lord, opens up its meaning more fully, and gives greater order, consistency, and harmony to it, as a whole, than any other explanation supplies.

It may be so ; we are certainly not prepared to affirm or attempt to prove the opposite. In order, however, to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion on the subject, to pass a judgment on it entitled to any weight, one would require to have studied thoroughly and patiently the whole circle of the prophetic writings, to have made himself master of the peculiar kind of lan-

guage, figurative and symbolical, which is there employed, and in particular to have candidly weighed and balanced the strangely conflicting testimonies that have been adduced in favor of and against the idea of a personal and premillennial advent of the Redeemer. It so happens, however, that among those who have made this province of unfulfilled prophecy their peculiar study, the most various and the most discordant opinions prevail. They differ not only in their interpretation of individual prophecies, but in the systems or methods of interpretation that they employ. For some this region of Biblical study has had a strange fascination, and once drawn into it there appears to be a great difficulty in getting out again. Perhaps the very dimness and doubtfulness that belong to it constitute one of its attractions. The lights are but few and straggling and obscure. Yet each new entrant fancies he has found the clue that leads through the labyrinth, and with a confidence proportioned to the difficulties he imagines he has overcome, would persuade us to accompany him. Instead of inclining us the more to enter, the very number and force of these conflicting invitations serve rather to repel. We become afraid of getting beneath a

spell that somehow or other operates so powerfully, so engrossingly, upon all who yield themselves to its influence.

Apart, however, from any such timidity (which would be censurable if the questions raised were ones that could be settled), I cannot think that there are sufficient materials in our hands for arriving at any clear and definite conclusion as to the time and the manner of the yet future advents of Christ. Nay more, I am convinced that it was never meant by the framer of the prophecies regarding them that any distinct vision of the future should, by help of them, be obtained by us. They are couched in the language peculiar to prophecy, of which this is a distinctive feature,—that you cannot, by mere inspection, positively say whether each and every announcement is to be taken literally or figuratively ; and, if figuratively, how it is to be fulfilled. It is so far true that the part already accomplished does put into our hand a key, by help of which the part yet unaccomplished may be partially understood. It is, however, but a little way that we can be thus helped on ; for the prophecies are not framed throughout after one uniform mould or pattern, so that if you can unlock one portion, you can unlock the

whole. There is such a variety of construction in the different parts that much must remain of double or doubtful import, till the interpreting event occurs. It has been so with all that section of the prophetic writings of which the fulfillments are already before our eyes. It must be so with all that lies over to be accomplished in the future. Who then shall tell us beforehand what is to be taken literally and what figuratively? In stating their case, the advocates on either side, for and against the premillennial advent, adduce certain passages which, taken as plain historic statements of what is hereafter to occur in the history of our globe, appear undoubtedly to prove what they are adduced to substantiate. But taken in the same way, passages are quoted on the other side which are in open conflict with these. The way in which either party attempts to remove the discordance is to assign a figurative sense to announcements which are at variance with those which they adopt as plain and simple narratives of what is to happen. All cannot be taken literally, neither can all be taken figuratively, without jars and discords; and take which side you may, it will be found that there are passages in such apparent and direct opposi-

tion to your conclusions, that you have to do violence to your own method of interpreting the others in order to get rid of their opposition. This is so unsatisfactory that on the whole we are not only disposed to hold our judgment in this matter in suspense, to wait till the event supplies the explanation, but we are inclined to believe that the obscurities and difficulties which now stand in the way of anything like a minute interpretation of the prophecies beforehand were intentionally, and of set purpose, thrown around them by their utterer, that while there was enough to awaken inquiry and kindle hope, there might not be enough to enable any one to draw out a chronological chart of the future, or announce beforehand the exact dates of any of the great occurrences foretold. More than once our Saviour said to the disciples—and in so saying did he not teach us the chief use of prophecy?—‘I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.’* And did he not, in the very midst of his foretellings of his own second coming, interject the saying: ‘But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no,

* John xiv. 29.

not the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only?' Was the man Christ Jesus in the days of his humiliation himself kept in ignorance of that day and hour? It may have been so. As in childhood he grew in wisdom, knowing things this year that he had not known the year before, so in manhood revelations of the spiritual world may have been gradually communicated, and the knowledge of that day and hour kept in reserve,—kept in the Father's own hand till after his death and resurrection. Or it may have been, that though personally he knew, it was a knowledge not to be communicated. Anyhow, that day and hour were to have a cloud of obscurity thrown over them which neither men nor angels were to be permitted to see through.

But with all the obscurity thus intentionally thrown around the day and the hour, let us not forget that no obscurity whatever, no uncertainty whatever, hangs around the great event itself; that the same Jesus whom the clouds received out of the apostles' sight, as they gazed up after him into heaven, shall come again the second time without sin unto salvation. Putting all intervening comings out of sight, we know that he shall come at the end

of the world, and we know that our death is virtually the end of the world to each of us. In all that future which lies before us, these are the only two events of which we are absolutely certain : our own approaching death, our Lord's approaching advent. Our faith in the certainty of the one rests on the uniformity of nature ; our faith in the other on the sure testimony of our Lord himself,—a testimony that we put above the other, for he says, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' We must all die, and we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Our eyes must close forever on this present scene ; our eyes must open to the scene of Jesus Christ upon this earth as our great Judge. The same double feature belongs to both : absolute certainty as to the event, entire uncertainty as to the time. We may die to-morrow ; we may not die till many years hence. Christ may come to-morrow ; may not come till many centuries hence. One might have expected that with all thoughtful men who believed themselves to be immortal, who felt themselves to be sinful and accountable, this double feature of the two events—events charged with such immeasurably im-

portant issues,—would have stimulated to constant watchfulness, would have intensified solicitude, would have served to keep us humble, keep us earnest, keep us faithful. But alas for the thoughtless, careless, unbelieving spirit that is in us : we make the very things, so fitted and intended to work in us these salutary effects, minister to indifference and unconcern. All acknowledge that we must die soon. It is the common fate, we say, and put the thought of death away. We know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth,—we are absolutely uncertain whether our next step shall fall here upon the solid earth, or there in the viewless eternity. We turn the very uncertainty into an argument for delay, and postpone preparation till the time for it may be gone. The truth is, that we naturally live here under a terrible tyranny—the tyranny of the present, the sensible, the temporal ; a tyranny but little felt by those who give themselves up willingly and wholly to its power. But, felt or unfelt, acknowledged or unacknowledged, it is one which must be met, and be overcome, if we would share the Christian character on earth or rise to the Christian blessedness in heaven. The future must carry it over the present ; the unseen over the seen ;

the eternal over the temporal. Here lies the trial and here lies the triumph of the faith that is in Jesus Christ ; for who is he that overcometh, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ ? and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith—faith in the unseen Saviour ; faith in his having lived and died for us on earth ; faith in his having passed into the heavens, appearing there in God's presence for us ; faith in his future coming to take us to himself. By watchfulness, by prayer, by all good fidelity to our absent Lord, let us nourish this vital principle of faith within us ; so that when at last, whether it be through his messenger death, or through the signals of his own personal appearance, it is said to us, 'Behold he cometh !' the ready answer of our spirit may be, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus !'

XI.

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.*

Tuesday.

TWO great duties lay on those to whom our Lord's prophecies as to his future advents were addressed,—watchfulness and diligence. These duties he proceeded to illustrate and enforce in two parables to which a peculiar interest attaches, as spoken at such a time and to such an audience. The first of the two parables was that of the Ten Virgins.

Among the Jews the marriage ceremony was always celebrated at nightfall, and the marriage supper was given in the house of the bridegroom, and not in that of the bride. The bridegroom, accompanied by a select number of companions, his friends, goes to the house of the bride, to conduct her thence to her new home. The bride, with a corresponding attendance of companions, awaits his arrival, and

* Matt. xxv. 1-13.

then, the two bands united, the bridal procession moves on to the dwelling where the bridal feast is prepared. The ten virgins spoken of in the parable are friends of the bride, and are waiting, either at her house, or some suitable place by the way, for the announcement of the bridegroom's coming, that they may join the marriage procession, go forward with it, and sit down at the provided feast. All the ten have lamps. This in every event was necessary, as it was only by lamp-light or torch-light that the procession could move on. But these lamps of the ten virgins were not in all likelihood their own, nor carried by them only for the light they were to yield. As it was customary to provide wedding garments, so was it to provide wedding lamps,—such lamps of themselves marking out those that bore them as invited guests. Each of the ten virgins of the parable has got such an invitation to appear on this occasion as an attendant on the bride and has accepted it, and each holds in her hand the symbol of her character and office. Very likely the lamps were all of one material and pattern. Very likely the ten bearers of these were all dressed alike, and that, looking at them as they took up together their appointed post,

you might have seen but little if any difference in their outward appearance or equipment. Yet there was a great, and, as it proved, a radical, a vital difference between them. Five of them were wise and five were foolish. The wise showed their wisdom in this, that they provided beforehand for a contingency which, however unlikely, they foresaw might possibly occur. The lamp furnished to them had quite enough of oil in it to last all the time that it was thought it would be needed. There was more than enough oil in it to carry the bearers from the one house to the other; and had all gone as it was at first arranged—had the bridegroom come at the usual, the set time—the marriage lamp, with the ordinary supply of oil that it contained, would have been sufficient. But to the five wise virgins the idea had occurred that it was at least within the bounds of possibility that a delay in the bridegroom's coming might take place. Some unforeseen accident might occur, some unthought-of hindrance be thrown before him on his way. To be prepared for such delay in case it should occur, they took with them other separate vessels beside their lamps,* containing a supply

* Matt. xxv. 44.

of oil in reserve, upon which they might draw in the event of what was in the lamp itself being all consumed. The foolish virgins showed their folly in this, that they were quite satisfied with the provision of oil made for them by their inviters, and never thought of supplementing it by any additional provision of their own. Perhaps the idea of a delay in the bridegroom's coming never occurred to them. It was a thing that but rarely happened. The idea of it would not naturally or spontaneously arise. It would do so only to those who gave themselves purposely and deliberately to think over beforehand all that might happen, in order to be provided for it. Even if the possibility of some delay had occurred or been suggested to these foolish virgins, they would have satisfied themselves with thinking that it never could be so long as to burn out all the oil which their lamps contained. They were quite sure that all would go right; that the bridegroom would come at the right time; they were all too eager about the meeting, and the march, and the spread-out banquet, to allow their minds to be troubled with calculating all the possible evils that might occur, and how they could be most effectually guarded against.

But they were mistaken in their anticipations. 'The bridegroom tarried.' Taking the parable as a prophetic allegory, this is one of the many hints given by our Lord, even to the first disciples, that his second coming might possibly be deferred longer than they thought. He would not tell them how long ; he would say nothing that should absolutely and wholly preclude the idea of his speedy advent, his coming at any time, to any generation of the living ; but yet he would not have them so count upon his coming being at hand, as to make no preparation for his absence being prolonged, as to commit that species of folly chargeable upon the five foolish virgins.

And 'while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept,'—the wise and the foolish alike. Perhaps there may be a prophetic glance towards that which shall be the condition of the world at the time of Christ's second coming—to the general surprise with which that event shall burst upon a slumbering unexpectant earth. Whatever secondary allusion of this kind it may carry with it, you will notice that this slumbering and sleeping of all is not only what might naturally have been expected under the circumstances, but what is

necessary to lead the story on to the contemplated issue. The delay had been longer than any one could have imagined. The bridegroom should have been there soon after the darkness had fallen. At midnight, had the set and common time been kept, not only would the procession have been all over, but the feast nearly finished. It had been with all the virgins a busy day, getting all things ready for so great an occasion. Was it wonderful that when, hour after hour, there was no signal of the approach, tired nature should claim her due, their excited spirits should fail and flag, their eyes get heavy, and that they should all slumber and sleep? Had there been no such sleeping, had all kept awake throughout, the foolish virgins, by the gradual consumption of the oil within their lamps, perhaps by noticing also and reflecting on the provision in the separate vessels that their companions had made, would have become timeously aware of the danger that was at hand, and might have provided against it. On the other hand, had it been the foolish only who slept, and while they slept had the wise been watching at their side, we could not well have excused them if, when the foolish awakened, they had charged their com-

panions with great unkindness in having suffered them to sleep on, when they must have seen the catastrophe that was impending. We are disposed, therefore, to regard this incident as thrown in, rather in order to conduct the story to its proper close, than as having any distinct and peculiar symbolic signification of its own.

At midnight the cry came : ' Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him.' This cry rouses all the sleepers ; all is haste and bustle now, as if there were an eagerness to make up for the previous delay. As they start up from their sleep, the ten virgins all see that their lamps, which they eagerly grasp, are just dying out. With the wise it is a quick and easy thing to clear and cleanse the wick, and to pour in a fresh supply out of their auxiliary vessels. A minute or two so spent, and their lamps are burning as brilliantly as at the first. Not so with the foolish virgins. They look despairingly at their fading lights. They have no fresh oil to feed their flame. The only resource in their extremity is to apply, in all the eagerness and impatience of despair, to their companions. ' Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' But the

wise had been economic as they had been foreseeing. They had enough for themselves, but no such superabundance that they could safely and prudently supply their neighbors. 'Not so ; lest there be not enough for us and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.' It was the only alternative left. But, alas ! it failed ; for while they were away beating up the oil-sellers, and trying to make a speedy purchase, the bridegroom came ; the five that were ready passed on with him in the procession, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.

The ten virgins of the parable represent so many of the professed disciples of our Lord. Their common equipment, and their common attitude,—all of them with marriage lamps in their hands, standing waiting the bridegroom's coming,—tell us of that prepared and waiting posture in which all who call themselves by the name of Christ are or ought to be found, as those who are looking for the coming and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

It would, however, be unjust to this parable, and it would involve us speedily in inextricable difficulties of interpretation, if we either took

the ten virgins as representing the whole collective body of the visible Church, or took the difference of conduct here displayed, and the difference of destiny to which it led—the final separation of the five wise and five foolish—as typical of those two companies which are to stand, the one on the right hand and the other on the left of their great Judge. Christ's object here is much more limited. He is urging throughout this part of his discourse the duty of watchfulness with regard to his approaching advent; and in this parable it is one form or kind of that watchfulness which he desires to inculcate. He does this by showing in an illustrative instance what special benefit it may be to him who practices it, and what painful consequences the absence of it may entail. The kind of watchfulness here so strikingly pressed upon our regards, and emblematically exhibited in the conduct of five of the ten virgins, is prudence, that reflective forethought, which busies itself in providing beforehand for emergencies that may possibly arise; the same virtue, transferred to spiritual things, which distinguishes the wise and the prudent of this world, who profitably spend many an hour in conjecturing what possible contingencies as to their earthly

affairs may arise, and in contriving and arranging how each, if it do happen, should be met.

Among the children of the kingdom, the wise and the prudent are they who, having been called to that marriage-supper of the Lamb, and having received the gracious invitation to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, prize the invitation so highly, and are so anxious that nothing should defraud them of the eternal blessedness to which it points, that they give themselves with all diligence to the consideration of all the possible risks that might come in the way of its finally being made good to them, and to the best methods of guarding against them should they occur. They look beyond the present, they anticipate evil before it comes, they strive to secure themselves against surprise, to stand forearmed to meet each enemy. Opposed to them, and answering to the foolish virgins of this parable, are those thoughtless disciples, who, satisfied with having got the invitation, and with being ranked among the number of the invited, foresee no danger, take no precaution, and make no provision against it. We do not doubt that, underlying that distinction between such wisdom and such folly, which it is the special

and exclusive design of the parable to show forth, there is another broader, deeper, and more radical distinction,—even that which separates the nominal from the real, the false from the true professor of Christianity. You will soon find, however, (as numberless interpreters have done), that if you make that broader and deeper distinction, the one here set forth, you will not be able, except by the use of great and unseemly violence, to make the story tally with the interpretation. A lamp is about as good an emblem of visible Christianity as one could wish, and so it is very natural to regard the ten lamp-bearers of the parable as standing as representatives of the entire visible Church ; and the oil which feeds the lamp is also an apt emblem of that special quickening grace of God's Spirit (frequently in the Bible spoken of as an anointing with oil), the infusion of which into the heart makes the true Christian to differ from the mere nominal professor. But if that were the difference intended to be symbolized here by the lamp and the oil, it ought to be a lamp without any oil, or a lamp with a different kind of oil in it, which represented the mere nominal profession, the show without the substance of true piety. But not only are the

lamps of all the ten virgins alike, they are all filled at first, and filled with the same kind of oil, and burn with the same kind of flame. It is not for bringing with them oil-less, lightless lamps, it is not for filling them with some spurious kind of liquid, sending up only smoke and stench instead of the pure and lambent flame, that the foolish virgins suffer so great a loss. It is simply and solely for not having a sufficient supply of the oil laid up beforehand. If, notwithstanding the difficulty which stands in the way of such interpretation arising from the fact that the foolish as well as the wise have some oil in their lamps, we still cling to the idea—which it is difficult for us to discard, it is so just and so pleasing—that this oil does represent the grace of the Holy Spirit, would not the fair and indeed only conclusion from this parable be, that there is a certain equal measure of this grace bestowed at first on all alike, such as Romanists believed to be bestowed at baptism, and that the difference between the lost and saved, between true and false Christians, hinges not on the kind but on the quantity of the grace possessed, on the one laying up a separate and sufficient stock beforehand, on the other neglecting to do so? But even were we pre-

pared for such a view of the parable as would involve such consequences, where could the spiritual parallel be found to the separate vessels in which the reserve supply is treasured?

Instead then of taking the oil as an emblem of the Spirit's regenerating grace, and the lamp as an emblem of the outward form or profession of discipleship, and then trying to give a correspondent spiritual meaning to the different incidents of the story, and to make the difference finally brought out between the wise and the foolish virgins tally with the difference between all those into whose hearts the heavenly grace has come, and all in whom it is wanting,—is it not wiser and better here, as in the interpretation of so many of our Lord's parables, to confine the parable within its own proper bounds, and, looking at its broad and general object, to take it as designed to impress upon our hearts the great need of a wise and watchful forethought, the great danger to which the want of this forethought exposes, the sad and awful issues to which it may conduct?

Let us return now to the parable, and take up the closing incidents about the marriage, as to which there can be no uncertainty. 'The bridegroom came; and they that were ready

went in with him to the marriage.' The future, the everlasting blessedness in store for all true followers of Christ, is spoken of here, as so frequently elsewhere, as a royal banquet or feast. 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' Scene of unrivalled glory, of exhaustless joy ; rich and rare the food provided for the guests in the great banqueting-hall of immortality ! Other viands at other feasts soon pall on the sated sense ; but for those viands upon which the spirits of the blessed shall for evermore be nourished up into a growing likeness unto God, the appetite shall ever grow quicker the more that is partaken, and the relish be ever the more intense. The companionship at other festivals finally wearies ; sooner or later we begin to desire that it should close ; but in the hallowed unions and fellowships that shall be there, new sources of interest, new springs of delight shall be ever opening, each coming to know the other better, and each fresh access of knowledge bringing fresh access of love, and confidence, and joy. Other feasts are broken up, and sad and dreary is the hall where hundreds met in buoyant joy, when, the guests all gone, the lights grow dim, and darkness and loneli-

ness take the place of the bright smile and ringing laugh. But that marriage supper of the Lamb shall know no breaking up, its tables shall never be withdrawn, its companionship shall never end.

‘They that were ready went in: and *the door was shut.*’ What a surprise, what a disappointment, the five foolish virgins must have met with when they came and found that already the bridal party had entered, the bridal supper had commenced, and that the door was closed against their entrance! They had been invited to this marriage feast, and they had accepted this invitation, as special friends of the bride. The idea of their being excluded from the banquet had never entered into their minds, no, not even after their lamps had gone out. True, they had not taken the same precaution with their wiser companions, but who could have predicted so tedious a delay? True, they had not been able to join the procession at the first, but now they have got fresh oil, and their lamps are burning as brightly as at first. The door is closed against them—surely by inadvertence; it had not been perceived that they still were wanting to complete the company. They knock, the door opens not;

they hear the bridegroom's own voice within, the very voice of their inviter. With an eagerness in which fear begins to mingle, they cry out, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' The only answer they get is, 'Verily, I know you not ;' an answer which too plainly tells them that within that joyous dwelling they never shall set foot.

The warning here strikes home upon us all. We too have heard the invitation of our Saviour, and outwardly have accepted it. Our Christianity may be such as shall stand well enough the scrutiny of our neighbors, and as may open to us without any right of challenge admission to the table of communion. But how many are there among such professors of Christianity for whom a surprise as unexpected and as terrible is in reserve as met those foolish virgins! The man who never fears that it may be so with him at the last, who can hear about the door of heaven being shut against those who, up to the last, expected to get in, and no trembling apprehension come upon his spirit that he himself may be among that number, is the very man in whose person that terrible catastrophe is most likely to be realized. When we know that there is so great a possibility, nay,

we may say, so great a probability of self-deception ; when we believe that so many have practised that self-deception on themselves throughout life, and never have awakened from its illusions till they stood before that door of heaven and found it closed against them forever ;—how diligent in self-scrutiny should each of us now be ; how anxious that he possess not the name only, but the disposition, the character, the habits, the conduct of a true follower of Jesus Christ ! Let us apply then to ourselves those most impressive words of Christ,—‘Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in heaven. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’

But that door which Christ himself here tells us will be closed at last against so many, is it not now open unto all ? Yes. It stands before us, invitingly near, most easy of access, with this blessed inscription written over it, in

characters so large that he who runs may read : 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' How different in this respect from those other doors at which you see so many of our race stand knocking,—the doors that lead to wealth, or fame, or ease and pleasure ! These doors stand so far back, away from where the multitude are naturally standing, that many, in the rush and throng and pressure never get near them, though they toil to do so all their lives. Close in upon and around each of them what crowds are gathered, knocking so eagerly, so impatiently, often with such impetuous violence ! They open, however, to but a few of all this number. For one that finds entrance there are hundreds that are kept without. Why is it that the great multitude will still keep rushing to these doors that remain shut against so many, while so few try that other door that remains closed against none ? Is it that this gate to which our Saviour points us is so strait, the way that he would have us walk in, is so narrow ? True, the gate is strait,—but strait, why, and to whom ?—Strait, indeed impossible to pass through, to all who come to it environed with the thick wrapping of pride and worldliness and the spirit of self-trust.

But strip yourselves of these, come naked and bare of them, come in all humility, with a broken and contrite heart, and you will not find it strait, but most easy of passage. True, the way is narrow, narrow for each individual traveller; but who that ever tried to tread it would wish it to be broader, to be so wide as to suffer him unchecked to wander away from God, or lapse into any transgression of that law which is so holy, and just, and good? Narrow as it is to each, that way has breadth enough for all to walk in it without any of that jostling, and striving, and sore competing toil which mark the broader way that so many take.

Enter ye in at that strait gate. Walk ever humbly, diligently, with careful footstep, with watchful wisdom on that narrow way, and then let the alarm rise when and how it may; let the cry strike the ear, 'Behold, he cometh!' No shut door shall be before you. For you, as for your great Forerunner, for you because you follow him, the everlasting doors shall be lifted up, and the glad welcome given: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

XII.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.*

Tuesday.

THE parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, afford material for very interesting and instructive comparison and contrast. They were delivered at different times, in different circumstances, and they carry with them internal evidence of these diversities. The parable of the pounds† was the last delivered by our Lord out of Jerusalem, that of the talents the last delivered in it. Jesus was on his way up to Jerusalem on the occasion of his last visit to the holy city. He had reached and passed through Jericho; large numbers had been attracted to him, who were full of vague expectation; and it was because they thought that the kingdom of heaven should

* Matt. xxv. 14-30.

† Luke xix. 11-28.

immediately appear that he spake the parable of the pounds. That parable, as originally delivered, had a much wider scope and bearing than the parable of the talents. It was meant as a warning to the whole nation of the Jews, embracing those of that nation who were to receive and those who were to reject Jesus as the Messiah. He knew well the shock to which his approaching death and disappearance would expose all those whose ideas and hopes regarding him had been of an entirely secular character. He foresaw the latent enmity to him which would break out as soon as he was removed ; and he knew also the many perils to which his own disciples would be exposed by so sudden and unexpected a departure,—the evils which his continued absence was likely to produce. In the prophetic picture which the parable of the pounds holds up, both friends and enemies are introduced, and to both appropriate premonitions are given. Christ likens himself to a nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to return. The idea is no doubt borrowed from Archelaus and others of the Idumean family going to Rome to be invested with the royal authority, and returning to Judea to be ac-

knowledge as the lawful sovereign. In going away, the nobleman calls his ten servants, the whole body of his domestics, and gives each of them a pound, saying, 'Occupy till I come.' But the action of the parable is not confined to those servants of the nobleman; it takes in all those citizens besides, who, so soon as his back is turned, whatever may have been their dispositions and conduct towards him when he was there in person among them, break out into open and undisguised hostility, and go the length even of sending a messenger after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Again on the return of the nobleman, having received the kingdom, after reckoning with his servants, and seeing and rewarding the diligence of those who had made a good improvement of the money committed to their care, the king calls for those his enemies who would not that he should reign over them, and has them slain in his presence. In the conduct of the citizens, and in the punishment of those who cast off his rule, the parable of the pounds embraces a class not covered by that of the talents, which has throughout to do alone with the master and his servants. This latter parable was delivered, not to a mixed

audience, but to one singularly select. It was not merely that none but disciples were present, none of those for whom that branch of the story about rebellious citizens and their punishment was intended,—there were none but apostles present. Now, corresponding to this, let us notice, that Christ stands represented here by a master who, on leaving, calls, it is said, his own servants, those who were his servants in some closer or more peculiar sense than was the case with ordinary domestics; and of those there are but three,—both name and number indicating that it is Christ's connection with those who, like the apostles, were admitted to closer relationship, and had bestowed on them peculiar privileges, which is here more particularly illustrated. And this view of the more limited embrace of the parable of the talents is confirmed when we compare what the ten servants (the wider household of the nobleman), and the three servants (the personal attendants of their master), have committed to them, on the occasion of his departure. The ten, the more numerous body—representative, therefore, as we conceive, of the general body of disciples—get all alike: each a single pound, a pound being but the

twentieth part of a talent. It is the common possession, the common property, the common privileges of all disciples, what each and all of them have had bestowed on them by their great Master in the heavens, which is here set forth. On the other hand, the one, the two, the five talents given to each of the three servants, represent the larger but more special donations conferred, not on all alike, but in singular variety and in unequal proportions. That such peculiar bestowments of the divine grace are here pointed at may still further appear from what is said about each of the three getting one, or two, or five talents,—each man *according to his ability*,—his natural capabilities, whatever they may be, not forming part of the talent or talents committed to his trust, but rather forming the ground and measure upon which, and in proportion to which, these are bestowed. As this master has three servants, to whom, according to their original ability, he intrusts a larger portion of his goods than he would commit to ordinary servants, so the Great Master of the spiritual household has those to whom, in the wider spheres of opportunity and of influence opened up to them, in the richer spiritual gifts and graces bestowed,

qualifying them to fill those spheres, he assigns a higher function, as he looks for a corresponding and commensurate return.

Such seem to be legitimate enough conclusions from the different audiences to which the two parables were addressed, the different ends they were designed to gain, the different structure of their opening sections. Of far greater importance, however, than the tracing of any such nice distinctions—in which it is quite possible that we may go too far, is it to fix our thoughts upon that common, general, universal lesson embodied in both these parables. All of us who have made the Christian profession acknowledge ourselves as servants of an absent Lord. He has temporarily withdrawn from us his visible presence, but he has not left us with the bonds of our servitude lightened or relaxed. So far from this, do not these parables very clearly and significantly point to something peculiar in the interval betwixt his withdrawal and return, marking it off as one of special probation? Let us remember that it is from the relationship which of old existed between a master and his slaves that the imagery of these parables is taken. A slave in those days might not only be called to do the ordinary

work, household or out-of-doors, which fell to the lot of an ordinary domestic ; but if he had the talent for it, or were trustworthy, his master might allow him to engage in trade, or to practise in any profession, the master receiving the profits, the slave reaping the benefit of better position and better maintenance. Were such a master, on going away for a considerable period from his home and country, to give three of his slaves who were thus employed, full and unchecked liberty in his absence to follow the bent of their own taste and talent, instead of prescribing for each of them a certain kind and amount of work which, under the eye of his overseer, day by day, and week by week, they were to perform, we would speak of this as liberal treatment, as a mark on his part of trust and confidence. But if, still further, such a master, on the eve of his departure, were to summon his slaves into his presence, and supply them with a larger or a smaller capital to operate on, which capital they were left at perfect freedom to employ each as he pleased, provided only that he employed it always as his master's capital, and kept the returns as his master's profits, whether such a procedure on the master's part be assigned to a selfish or to a

generous motive, most certainly it would place the servant in a new and peculiarly responsible position—put him upon a special probation. Such is the position which all true servants of the Saviour occupy ; and such the probation to which they are now exposed. Our Master is not here personally to assign to us our different places and our different work ; he is not here directly to inspect, and day by day, at each day's close, to call us into his presence and make the reckoning with us. He has retired from the platform of this visible creation ; but not the less, rather indeed the more, are we under obligation to work for and to work under him ; for has he not treated us with a generous liberality ? has he not left us so to deal with that portion of his goods he has put into our hands as to each of us seemeth wisest and best ? has he not left us to cultivate each the special talent he has bestowed ? and broad and varied as the field of human effort, so broad and varied has he not made that field, in cultivating which we may still be serving him ? has he not even warned us,—however different our ways of life,—against judging one another, saying to us, ‘ Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? to his own master he

standeth or falleth ?' And has he not generously dealt out to us of his goods, leaving none of us, no, not the youngest, the weakest, the poorest, the least gifted, bankrupt of the means to serve him, without the single pound ? The one, the two, the five talents, have they not been lavishly conferred ? And we have accepted all as put into our hands by him, as still his ; as ours only to be used for him as he desires. That, and no less, lies involved in our very profession as Christians.

'The Lord Jesus Christ, whose I am and whom I serve,'—one of the best and briefest descriptions of discipleship ; yet how much does it include ! All the greatest religious ideas and beliefs are simple ; the difficulty lying not in the intellectual conception, but in the practical realization of them. Is it not so with the idea that we are servants, stewards having nothing that we can absolutely call our own ; nothing that we are left at liberty to dispose of irrespective of the will of the Sovereign Proprietor in the heavens. Easy enough in thought to embrace this idea ; easy enough in words to embody it ; not difficult to get an acknowledgment of it from every one who has any faith in God or Christ ; it is so natural, so

necessary a conclusion from the position in which we and our Creator, we and our Redeemer, stand to one another. But truly, habitually, practically, to carry the idea out ; to regard our time, our wealth, our faculties, our influence, as all given us to be spent and exercised under the abiding, controlling conviction that they are ours but in loan, held by us but in trust,—another's property assigned to us to be administered agreeably to his will and for his good and glory ; let us all be ready at once to say how difficult we have felt it to frame our doings upon this principle ; to live and act as the servants of that Master to whom, ere very long, we shall have to give in the strict account as to how every portion of that capital which he advanced was employed. The sense of accountability is universally felt—is so wrought into the tissue of our moral nature that you cannot extract it thence without the destruction of our moral being. Yet, alas ! more or less with all of us, is it not as the voice of one crying in vain in the market-place, a voice pleading for the divine ownership over us, to which we render, when we pause to listen to it, the homage of respectful consent, but which is drowned and lost amid the other

nearer, louder, more vehement voices which salute our ear?

But let us turn now to the reckoning and the reward. In the parable of the pounds,—on the nobleman's return, he calls for those servants to whom he had given the money, to see how much each had gained by trading. The first servant approaches and says, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said, Well done, thou good servant; thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.' A second servant says, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.' He repeats the same words to him, 'Well done, thou good servant; thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over five cities.' In the parable of the talents,—the first servant comes and says, 'Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said to him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.' The second comes and says, 'Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well

done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

We have but to put the two narratives together to bring out the distinction which is made in the reward conferred upon the two servants in the parable of the pounds, and the absence of any such distinction in the case of the two servants in the parable of the talents. He who of one pound had made ten, gets the lordship over ten cities ; he who of one pound had made five, gets the lordship over five,—an exact proportion kept between the service rendered, the increase effected, and the reward bestowed. But he who doubled his two talents, though putting a less amount of gain into his master's hand, yet in the way of improvement of his powers and opportunities had done as much as he who doubled his five. You find no difference, accordingly, made between them ; the praise and the award is the same with both. One can scarcely believe that the variation here is accidental and insignificant, it carries with it so striking a verification of the divine declaration, 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.'

But while the primary and direct reward is thus meted out in such exact proportion to the zeal, fidelity, and success with which the original gift is employed, yet when the lost pound and the lost talent came to be disposed of, they are each at once handed over to the one who had most already, without respect to the previous service or increase. Had these been taken into account, he who out of two talents had gained other two would have had as good a claim to the forfeited talent as he who out of five talents had gained other five, whilst he who of one pound had made five, would have been entitled to a proportionate share of the disposable pound. All such claims, however, are overlooked. It is to him that hath the most that it is given, that he may have the more abundantly. In the curiously modified structure of these two parables, by that wherein they agree and that wherein they differ,—how strikingly is the double lesson taught, that while each man's proper and direct reward shall exactly tally with his proper and individual work, yet that in the distribution of extra or additional favors regard shall be had to existing position, existing possessions, existing capability ;—that the awards of Heaven shall be adjusted in du-

plicate proportion to the service previously rendered, and to the capacity presently possessed.

Let us not pass without remark the free and unconstrained, the warm and generous commendation which is expressed in the 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Doubtless there had been deficiencies ; these servants had not always been as diligent as they might have been ; many an opportunity had they let slip unimproved ; many a time had they been idle when they should have been active, slothful when they should have been watchful ; and even in their most diligent endeavors to turn to best account their master's means, an eye that very curiously scanned all their motives might easily have detected imperfections and flaws. But their generous Lord and Master does not in the day of reckoning go back thus upon the past to drag out of it all that could be brought up against them. He takes the gross result, and sees in it the proof and evidence of a prevailing fidelity. Ungrudgingly, and without any drawback, he pronounces his sentence of commendation and bestows his rich rewards. No earthly lord or master, in fable or in fact, on any day of reckoning, ever dealt so generously with those who had tried to serve him, as our hea-

venly Lord and Master will deal with us, if honestly, sincerely, devotedly, yet with all our manifold imperfections, we give ourselves to the doing of his good and holy will.

These good and faithful servants thus commended and thus rewarded, are they not held out as examples and encouragements? Is it wrong then to work the work of him that hath sent us into this world, or to be animated to increased diligence in that work, in order that we too may receive a similar commendation and share a like reward? Does any caution and reserve in the employment of such an argument,—the holding out of such an inducement,—mark the writings of the New Testament? Do the inspired teachers, when they hold up the rewards of immortality before our eyes, surround the exhibition with warnings against the imagination that any work of man can have any worth or be at all rewardable in the sight of God? Do they think it necessary to check and to guard every appeal of this kind which is made by them? Listen to the manner in which St. Paul speaketh on this subject: ‘Let no man beguile you of your reward. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap cor-

ruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.' Hear the manner in which St. Peter speaketh to those who had obtained like precious faith with himself, "Wherefore, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . . For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall : for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 'Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.' Above all, listen to the frequency, the particularity, the earnestness with which our Lord and Saviour himself urges this consideration upon his disciples. Would he comfort them under the world's reproach ? 'Blessed are ye,' he says. 'when men shall revile you, and persecute

you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake ; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' Would he warn them against ostentation in religion,—against being led away by the example of those who, by making long prayers, prayers in the synagogues and corners of the streets, enjoyed a large popular reputation for piety? 'But thou, when thou prayest,' he says, 'enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' Would he stir them up to works of love, to deeds of compassion? 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward ; and whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward. Nor has the Saviour's language changed, when after his ascension he shows himself to the beloved disciple. Among the latest of all Christ's reported words are these—'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his

work shall be. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Is heaven, then, to be represented as a place our right to enter which is to be won by our good works? No; to set forth heaven as a reward to be secured by human effort, by human worth, is a very different thing from setting forth a reward in heaven as that which is to crown every act of love and service which the Christian renders. Scripture never does the former. The sinner's acceptance with God, his title to eternal life, it attributes solely and exclusively to the merits of the Redeemer. From the office of justifying us in God's sight, our own works, of whatever kind they be, are absolutely and utterly excluded. But this does not imply that all the works of one who has not been justified, are utterly valueless and vile. The strict morality of that young man whom Jesus looked on, and whom Jesus loved, was not thus valueless, was not thus vile in the Redeemer's sight, and neither should it be in ours. Still less does it imply that the works of one who has been justified can have no such worth or merit as to be in any way rewardable. In the strictest sense

of the term, no creature, however high and holy, can merit anything at the hands of its Creator—that is, claim anything from God properly as his due ; for what has he that he has not received ? and whatever he do, he does but what God has a right to claim from him, and which consequently can give him no right to claim anything of God. But in that secondary sense in which alone we speak of worth, merit, rewardability, as attaching to human character, to human actions, you find in Holy Writ that the true Christian's works of faith and labors of love are spoken of as sacrifices acceptable, well pleasing to God, drawing after them here and hereafter a great reward.

There is no danger of urging to Christian work by a respect to the recompense of that reward in heaven which it shall bring hereafter in its train, if only we have a right conception of what kind of work it is that is there rewarded, and what kind of reward it is that it entails.

Had the servants in either of those parables which we have now before us been trading with the pounds or with the talents, in the belief that these were their own, or with the view of keeping the whole profits that they

realized to themselves, the 'Well done, good and faithful servant' would never have been pronounced on them, and into their hands no reward of any kind should in the day of reckoning have been put.

'Lord, *thy* pound hath gained ten pounds,'—the one pound was his lord's at the beginning, and the ten pounds are his lord's at the end. It is this fidelity and zeal in the management of another's property for another's behoof which is rewarded by the lordship over the ten cities. And even so is it of all spiritual service rendered unto Christ. Whatever is its outward form, however like to that which Christ requires, yet if it spring from a selfish or mercenary motive, if it be done with no other aim than to secure a personal advantage, it comes not within the range of that economy of reward which Christ has instituted in his kingdom.

Again, the rewards which the good and faithful servants are represented here as receiving, consist in their elevation to rule and authority,—a rule and authority not absolute or independent, not to be exercised for their own individual glory or their own individual good,—a rule and authority to be held by them but as

under-governors, in subjection still to their Lord and Master, and to be exercised by them for the good of his great empire. The reward consists but in a higher species of the same kind of service which they had rendered. The wages they have earned are made up of a larger quantity and a higher kind of work. You may bribe a man to diligent and continued labor in a work to which he has no heart, and under a master whom he cares little or nothing for, by holding out a tempting wage ; but then the wage must be different from the work, a wage of a kind which the man covets, for a work to which he is indifferent, or which is distasteful. But who would enter the service of any master, if the only wage that was offered was so much more work to do ? who but he who loved the work for the work's sake and the master's sake, and to whom, in consequence of that love to him and it, no more tempting offer could be held out than a larger sphere of labor and a larger power to fill it ? Such, and no other, are the terms of the Christian service. Such, and no other, the wages that our Heavenly Master holds out to all the laborers in his earthly vineyard. Do you love that Master with all

your heart? Is it the highest aim of your being to serve him? Is it the deepest joy of your heart when you are able to do him any service? Then, toiling laborer, look onward, upward to your heavenly reward. Now you often have but little liking to the spiritual service. Then your liking for it shall be so strong, you will never be able to keep your hand for a moment from the doing of it. Lazily, impurely, imperfectly is the work executed now; ardently, unremittingly, perfectly shall it be done then, and in such doing you shall enter into the joy of your Lord.

XIII.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.*

Tuesday.

‘GOD hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.’ ‘The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son.’ ‘We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.’—We might have imagined that all the ends of a judgment to come might have been gained by its taking effect on each separate spirit on its passage after death into the presence of the great Judge, its consignment thereafter to its appropriate condition. Besides this, however, we are taught that there is to be a time, a day specially set apart—at the resurrection from the dead, for the public, simulta-

* Matt. xxv. 31-34.

neous judgment of our whole race. Having warned his disciples of its approach, Jesus proceeds to describe some of this great day's incidents.

His final advent for judgment is to take the world by surprise. It is to come as in the night the thief cometh, as in the day the flash of lightning bursts from the bosom of the thunder-cloud. The day before its last shall see nothing unusual in the earth. Over one-half the globe, the stir and bustle of life shall be going on as in the days before the flood. They shall be eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage ; the market-places full of eager calculators, the fields of toiling laborers, the homes of thoughtless, happy groups. In the quiet churchyard the group of mourners shall be gathered round the last opened grave, the coffin shall have reached its resting-place, and the hand of the gravedigger be raised to pour the kindred earth upon the dead.

Over the other half of the globe the inhabitants shall have gone to rest ; the merchant dreaming of to-morrow's gains, the senator of his next day's oration. Awake in his solitary chamber the student shall be writing at his desk ; and in the banquet-room the lights shall be glit-

tering, and the inviting table spread, and dance and song and ringing laughter shall be there. Just then, without herald sent or note of warning given, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. That shout, that trumpet-call of heaven—that only sound that ever spanned at once the globe, and was heard the same moment at either pole,—how at its fearful summons shall the sleepers start up, their dreamings all cut short! The pen shall drop from the writer's hand; and a shivering terror, like that which filled Belshazzar's hall, shall run through the banquet-room, and the jest half uttered, the song half sung, they shall stare at one another in pale affright! In the thronging market-place the buyer shall forget the price he offered, the seller the price he asked: in the toiling harvest-field, the stooping reaper shall look up, and as he looks, the last cut grain of earth shall drop out of his hand; and in the quiet churchyard the work of burial shall be stopped, and the mourners shall see a strange commotion in the grave; for it shall do more, that trumpet-blast of judgment, than waken all the sleeping, arrest all the waking inhabitants of the globe. It shall go where

sound never went ; it shall do what sound never did : it shall penetrate the stony monument ; it shall pierce the grassy mound. Far down through many a fathom of the heaving waters shall it descend ; over the deep bed of ocean shall it roll. And at its summons the sea shall give up the dead that are in it ; and death and Hades the dead that are in them. Raised from their graves, the dead, both small and great, shall stand before the Lord. They shall ' be caught up to meet the Lord in the air ; lifted up above that earth upon which the renovating fire shall already be preparing to do its work. What a strange assemblage ! The babe that had been born but an hour before ; the ancient man who, in the times before the flood, had lived for nigh a thousand years ; the first buried, the last buried, the half-buried,—all the vast congregation of the dead mingling with the hosts of the living. And this great company, as it rises to meet the Lord in the air, is to approach another, it may be as large, descending from the heavens. For when the Son of Man shall come in his glory to judge the earth, ' all his holy angels ' are to come with him. Heaven for the time is as it were to empty itself of its inhabitants ; their shining ranks are to line the skies,

their bright forms bending in eagerness over the impending scene. And yet another company, of other aspect, is to be there—those angels ‘which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.’ Hell from beneath moved to meet the Lord at his coming ; its demon hosts drawn up unwillingly into close proximity with those who once in the ages long gone by had been their associates in the heavenly places. Hell and heaven brought thus for once together, with earth coming in between, that from its intervening companies each may draw to itself all it can claim as properly its own, and then, with a contrast heightened by the temporary contact and the fresh accessions gained, to part forever.

Soon as all the nations are gathered before him, the Judge shall send forth his angels, and by their agency shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and ‘he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left.’ This separation shall take place in silence. Child shall meet that day with parent, and friend with long-lost friend ; and parent shall part from child, and friend from friend ;—no wel-

comes given, no questions asked, no farewells taken. On him who fills that throne, set there for judgment, shall every eye be fixed, and in stillness deep as death shall each ear wait to drink in the sentence from his lips. Then, as in this mute and awful expectation all are standing, 'shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Every clause, almost every word here, is rich in meaning.

'Then shall the King say'—it is a king, it is *the* King, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who speaks. Visibly now before the assembled universe shall Jesus of Nazareth be enthroned. He who when here with us on earth, veiled his glory, took no higher title than the Son of Man, was content to stand before an earthly judgment-seat and be doomed to die,—shall come now with power and great glory. He shall come, as we are told in one place, in his own glory; as we are told in another, in the glory of the Father. With all the essential glory of his native divinity, even that glory which he had with the Father before the world was,—with all the additional accumulated glory accruing to him in virtue of his having triumphed

over death and hell for us men and for our salvation, shall he be then visibly invested. He shall 'sit upon the throne of his glory.' What this throne is as to its outward form and splendor, it may be idle to imagine. It is described in one scripture as a great white throne. Daniel, speaking of the appearance of the Son of Man, says that 'his throne was like the fiery flame.' He is to come, we are distinctly told, in the clouds of heaven. It was in a cloud that Jesus was borne up out of the apostles' sight as they gazed up towards heaven as he went up, and the two men in white apparel, who stood by them, said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'* It may be on a cloud-woven throne that Jesus shall then appear. If so, the clouds that form it shall have a brilliance brighter far than that of any which have ever floated in our skies; their splendor caught not from the shining on them of a far-distant sun, but coming from an inner glory too bright for human gaze, of which their richest lustre is

* Acts i. 11.

but a dim shadow—that shadow serving as a veil to shade and drape it, so as human eye may look upon it. But whatever its substance, whatever its form, it shall be in sight of all, a throne—the throne of judgment, to whose occupant the great and solemn work, one for which omniscience is needed, which the Omniscient alone could properly discharge, has been committed. Doubts have been entertained by some of the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ. When he comes, and is seated upon that throne with that royal retinue of angels around him, and undertakes and executes that mighty office of the Judge of all earth, shall any doubts of his divinity be cherished then? How suitable a thing in the arrangements of the divine government does it appear, that he who submitted to all the scorn and the contumely, the suffering and the death, for our redemption, should thus, at the winding up of the world's affairs, have assigned to him this office of trust and honor; that to him every knee should be made then to bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

‘The king shall say to those on his right hand.’ To them he first shall turn, on them he

shall first fix his eye ; and when he takes the survey of that countless host stretching far and wide away, till it mingles with the crowd of angels gathering in and pressing near to those whom they wait to hail as members of the holy, happy family of the blessed, shall the spirit of the Redeemer not rejoice ? In sight of the multitude that no man can number, from every kindred, and tribe, and people, and nation, all ransomed from sin and death through him, shall he not see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied ? It may be,—none can tell,—over the very scenes of his earthly sorrows that he shall then hover. The approach to this world must be made along some definite line, towards some definite locality. And what more natural, what more likely, than that the throne should rest above the eminence on which the cross once stood ? And if, as he once more nears the places,—now seen for the last time, ere they pass away amid dissolving fires,—the sorrows of the great agony and death that he there endured should rise up to his thoughts, would not the sight of that goodly company of the redeemed on his right hand make the very memory of them to minister an abounding joy ? He shall not be insensible to the triumph of his

humiliation unto death which that day shall disclose. It shall be with no unmoved or unrejoicing spirit that he shall say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

He shall say '*Come,*' with what different feeling, with what a different effect, from what once attended the utterance of the same word! He had said once to all the sinful children of men, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' But he had to accompany and to follow up the gracious invitation with the sad and sorrowful exclamation, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.' But no danger now of this invitation being rejected, no sorrow to shade the spirit of him who gives it. With all the exultation of one who asks those to come whom he knows will be all ready rejoicingly to follow, does he utter the gracious word. '*Come,*' he says ; and each footstep is ready to advance, and each mansion in heaven 'echoes back the invitation, as if impatient to receive its guest.'

'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' His redeemed are not to be recognized as those who have been plucked by him out of the hand

of an angry God, whom it has taken the very utmost of service and sacrifice on his part to appease and propitiate. They are the blessed of the Father, equally as they are the ransomed of the Son. It is with the Father's full approval that they are invited to the realms of bliss. His pity, love, and mercy provided the lamb for the sacrifice ; and now that the first intentions of the redemption have been fulfilled in them by their entering into peace with him, and their drinking in of the spirit of his dear Son, his infinite benignity but waits to bless them in the full enjoyment of himself throughout all eternity. 'Ye blessed of my Father.' Here he pronounces the blessing who has power to make it good. We ask God's blessing on those we love ; but alas ! we have not that blessing at command. It is often but the vague wish of a kindly nature for others' happiness which takes that form. It is at best but the expression of a desire, the offering of a petition, which it remains with another to grant or to refuse. But to be called the blessed of the Father by Christ the Son, this is to be made the very thing they are pronounced to be ; and blessed forever shall they be of him who made heaven and earth, whose large capacity

to bless shall open all its stores, and lavish upon them all its bounties.

‘Inherit the kingdom.’ It is a kingdom, nothing less than a kingdom, that is to be entered on, possessed, enjoyed. To rise to be a king is the highest object of earthly ambition. To ascend a throne is to reach the highest summit of earthly elevation. A crown is the richest ornament the human brow can wear. And what is the burden of the song of praise of the redeemed? ‘Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.’ And what saith the Lord himself to all his faithful followers? ‘To him that evercometh will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.’ ‘Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.’ Whether in the condition of the redeemed hereafter there shall be anything of an outward kind, of position and prerogative, of authority and rule, corresponding to those of the kingly estate, we need not now inquire. A few dim and scattered hints upon this subject do meet our eye in the sacred

Scriptures, upon which, if it were cautiously attempted, some plausible enough conjectures might be grounded. There is one kingdom, however, that we know of, into full possession of which those on the right hand of the Judge shall enter, the glory and the blessedness of which need no outward accompaniment to enhance them—the kingdom of which Jesus spake when he said, ‘The kingdom of God is within you ;’ that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Within the heart of every true Christian this kingdom is even now set up and established. But here, even in its best estate, the empire of God and Christ, of truth, of love, of holiness, is a sadly distracted and divided one. It is sustained by constant conflict ; harassing always the inward strife, and varied the fortunes of this changeful war. But rejoice, all ye who have enlisted in this noblest of all conflicts, who, following Christ, with him as your great leader and exemplar ever before you, day by day are carrying on this inward warfare. The rule of your spirit, the empire of your heart, you have given to the Lord that bought you, and his finally, undividedly, forever it shall be. The struggle is not to last forever. The enemies,

so many, so powerful, within and without, by whom you are so often overcome, are not forever to haunt and harass and assault. At death they shall be driven from the field ; after death they shall cease to have all power, and then, when on that great day you stand on the right hand of the Judge, then shall the full, the perfect, the undivided reign of holiness commence, and in every thought and affection and desire of your heart doing willing homage to the Redeemer, in every faculty of your being going forth in the utmost intensity of its exercise rejoicingly to do his will, the kingdom shall be yours, Christ shall reign in you and you shall reign through him.

But this kingdom is to come to you by inheritance. It is not one that you are to win by your own efforts, that you are to acquire as if by right in virtue of any sacrifices made, any labors undergone, any victories achieved. It is to become yours by heirship, by the will of another, bestowed upon you as his children. You must first become children of God by faith that is in Jesus Christ, and, being children, then shall ye be heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. The title to the heavenly inheritance links itself at once and inseparably with

our vital union to Christ our living Head. Let Christ be ours by a humble trust, a loving embrace, a dutiful submission, then heaven is ours by consequence as natural and necessary as the son is heir to the possessions of his parent. Look ever, then, on that rich inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, as the blood-bought purchase of the cross, the full completed title to which is one of the things freely given you of God in Christ, to be instantly and gratefully received in the very moment of your first believing. Let your hope of heaven base itself thus from the first firmly upon Christ, and it shall grow up into strength, and be indeed the anchor of your soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil.

The kingdom 'prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' The preparation of this kingdom for us, of us for this kingdom, is no secondary, no subsidiary device, no after-thought of God. The redemption that is through Jesus Christ our Lord is not to be thought of by us as a scheme or plan fallen upon simply to meet and mitigate the evils of the Fall. The primary, the parent, the eternal purpose of the Supreme in the creation and

government of the world, was to make and fashion here the materials out of which a kingdom was to be erected, to stand throughout eternity a glorious monument of his wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and love. For this the foundations of the world were laid, for this was sin suffered to enter, for this did the Son of the Eternal become incarnate, for this he lived, he suffered, he died, he rose again, for this are we all being passed through the sifting, testing, humbling, purifying, and sanctifying processes which make up the spiritual web and tissue of our earthly life. How weighty the argument to give ourselves heart and soul, all we are and all we have, to Christ, that in us and by us, the earliest, the dearest, the dominant design of our Heavenly Father may be fulfilled. Shall we, by our indifference, our worldliness, our selfishness, our ungodliness, be parties to the defeating of this so ancient, so infinitely benignant purpose of the Most High? Should any of us doubt that if in simplicity of purpose we turn to Christ, and give ourselves to him, aught like repulse or failure shall await us? Will God refuse to do that in us and for us, the doing whereof to and for sinners such as we

are, has been one of the very things that from eternity has lain the nearest to his heart?

We know but little of what awaits us after death. It would appear, however, from all that the Scriptures say, that the first time that ever with bodily eye we shall look upon our Lord and Saviour, shall be on that day when he shall come sitting on the throne of his glory, when before him we and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered. If so, the first words that we shall ever hear issuing audibly from his sacred lips shall be these—may Heaven in mercy grant it shall be as spoken of, and to us, that they shall fall upon our ear,—‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

XIV.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.*

Tuesday.

IS Christ's description of his last coming to judge the world, as given in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, a parable like the three that precede it? Whilst substantially true, that is, true to the great fact that it announces and the great lesson it conveys, is it nevertheless to be taken as a story of the imagination, whose fancied incidents are but the drapery with which the hand of the great Artist clothes the fact and illustrates the lessons? We cannot believe so. The transition at the 31st verse from the style of the parable to that of plain and simple narrative is too marked to be overlooked or set aside. The Son of Man, who takes the place of the nobleman and the bridegroom, is a real not a figurative character, and all that is said in the 31st, 32d, 33d, and 34th verses bears the

* Matt. xxv. 35-46.

marks of a faithful recital of what is actually to happen when the last day of the world's history arrives. But after the separation between the righteous and the wicked has been effected, is the Judge to enter upon such a formal statement of the grounds upon which the sentence in either case is based ? and is there actually to be such a colloquy between him and those on his right hand and those on his left as is here recorded ? We can scarcely believe this. It is difficult even to conceive how or by whom so great a multitude on either side could conduct such a colloquy with the Judge as is here recited. Nor is it necessary to believe that such verbal communications should pass to and fro in order to get at the true bearing and import of the passage. The Judge is represented as adducing a single test, the application of which to the righteous and the wicked brings out one great distinctive feature of the difference between them. It cannot surely be meant that the one point on which the sentence is made here to hinge constitutes the only one of which any cognizance will be taken, and on which the decisions of the day will rest ; or, admitting that there are others, that it stands out so conspicuously above and beyond them all, that it alone

is regarded as furnishing the ground and reason of the verdicts given. We are inclined rather to believe that the single point of difference between those on the right hand and those on the left of the Judge is fixed upon as in itself supplying one of the most delicate, most discriminating, least fallible external proofs of the presence or the absence of that character of true discipleship to Jesus Christ, upon which the judgment proceeds. Outward acts or habits of the life, quoted and referred to by the Judge as the foundation of his judgments, could be so employed only in so far as they carried with them conclusive evidence as to the inner state of the mind and heart, only in so far as they were faithful and sufficient exponents of the inner springs and motives from which they flowed. But is there any kind or class of actions singularly and pre-eminently fitted, by their being always done by the one, and their being never done by the other, to mark off the true from the false, the real from the nominal followers of the Redeemer? I apprehend there is,—the very kind and class of deeds which the Judge here lays his hand upon as characteristic of those standing on his right hand ; for it is not any or every kind of feeding the hungry, or visiting the

sick, or clothing the naked, that will meet the description here given. Those acts of compassion, love, and mercy which can alone truly and fully appropriate that description to themselves must have these two peculiar qualities belonging to them—(1.) They must be done to the brethren of the Lord, so done as to justify the strong and striking language, ‘I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.’ (2.) They must be such that the doers of them were often if not always unconscious at the time that what they did was done unto Christ, else they could not honestly have answered as they did.

To whom, then, does Christ refer, when he speaks of the least of these his brethren, the rendering of any service to whom he reckons as so much kindness rendered to himself? For an answer to this leading question I refer you to two other sayings of our Lord. The first occurs at the close of his address to the apostles on sending them forth, when, after laying down in plainest and most emphatic terms the character and condition of the Christian discipleship, he

went on to say, 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.'*

Here the kind of giving which is in no wise to lose its reward is not simply the giving to one of Christ's little ones—which any one might do unawares, giving simply to the thirsty without regard to what they were,—but it is giving to them in the name of a disciple. The expression 'in the name of a disciple' is in itself ambiguous. It might either mean giving as a disciple, *i e.*, as one who bore that name or character ought to give, or it might mean giving to another because the other bore and possessed the character and name. There is another saying of our Lord which clears away this ambiguity, recorded in the Gospel by St. Mark :† 'For

* Matt. x. 40-42.

† Mark ix. 41.

whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.' If this and the saying already quoted be accepted as containing the true explanation of the words spoken by the Judge, his citation must be restricted to acts of kindness done to Christ's true disciples, on the specific ground of their character as such. There must be then some striking peculiarity attaching to such acts entitling them to be employed under such circumstances for so great and grave a purpose. Whatever this peculiarity be, we have advanced so far as to perceive that it depends on the connexion between those to whom the kindnesses are shown and Christ. It must be therefore in the character of that motive which would lead us specially to sympathize with and to succor those standing in this connexion. In common life there are two kinds of connexion which one man may have with another, the existence of either of which might generate a claim upon our sympathy and help. There may be the connexion of relationship and there may be the connexion of resemblance. You recognize the claim springing from the first of these when you say that you cannot see the

son of your best benefactor, or of your old and faithful friend, in want, unpitied and unrelieved.

You recognize the claim springing from the other when you say that one, so like in character, in principle, in taste, in habit, to the friend whom you admire above all others, to whom you are most tenderly attached, has a hold involuntarily upon your heart. Between the two there is this difference, that if relationship be the only ground on which you act, the idea of that relationship must be distinctly before your mind ; whereas, if it be similarity of character that supplies the impulse to benevolence, there may be at the time no felt or conscious reference to the person, likeness to whom may nevertheless form the secret spring of your conduct. As regards the union between Christ and all his true and faithful followers, the two species of connexion,—of relationship, and of resemblance,—are not only invariably to be found together, but you have no other sure means of knowing where the one tie, that of discipleship, exists, but by observing where the other, that of likeness, is manifested. The living heart-union with Christ which constitutes the central essential element of the Christian

character, is no bare external bond, such as earthly relationships so often are. It never does, it never can, exist without more or less of the spirit of the Saviour himself being poured into the heart, more or less of a likeness to Christ being impressed upon the life. To discern the image of the Saviour so produced, in its dimmest and most broken, as well as in its fullest and brightest forms, and to feel the force of that attraction which this image exerts, the observer himself must have been fashioned into the same image, must have drunk in of the same spirit. But every one that loveth him that begat, loveth also all who are begotten of him ; a secret sympathy, a bond of true and deep and everlasting brotherhood binds all together who are one in Christ,—one in the participation of his Spirit ; nor is it necessary to the force of that attraction being felt which draws them to one another, that a distinct or conscious regard be had either to Christ himself personally or to the common relationship in which they stand to him.

‘Oft ere the common source be known
The kindred drops will claim their own,
And throbbing pulses silently
Move heart to heart by sympathy.’

You may love, you may pity, you may help one of Christ's little ones without having Him before your thoughts, just as you may admire the splendor of a broken sunbeam without thinking of the orb of light ; nay more, the further he and the relationship are for the moment out of sight, the more purely and entirely that the sympathy and aid spring spontaneously from seeing and admiring and loving in a suffering brother the meekness and the gentleness, the patience and the devout submission which Christian faith inspires, the clearer and less doubtful the evidence that the same faith dwells in your own bosom, working there like results. The charity which flows unbidden from that inwrought kindredship of disposition by which all true followers of the Lamb are characterized, waiting not, when it sees a suffering brother, to make the inference that his belonging to Christ confers upon him a title to relief,—springs not from any anticipation of reward. It flows at once out of that love to Christ, supreme, predominant, which has taken possession of the heart. And hence the explanation of the answer which the righteous are represented as making to the declaration of the Judge,—the simple, natural

utterance of humility and surprise: 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came to thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.'

Should any one, then, under the impression that the first question to which in the great judgment he would have to give reply, would be this, 'Did you ever relieve any of Christ's brethren because of their being such?' feeling unfurnished and anxious to provide himself with a sufficient and satisfactory answer, go forth immediately and seek out some destitute disciples and minister to their wants, would such a ministry of benevolence as that suit the requirements of the Judge? Assuredly not. You might to any extent feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or visit the sick; those whom you thus clothed and fed and visited might be brethren of the Lord; nay, you might select them as the objects of your charity on that very account, and yet after all your charity

might be but selfishness in disguise, utterly wanting that element so delicately and beautifully brought out in the answer of the righteous, of being the unconscious emanation of a true love and a true likeness to Jesus Christ. No charity of mere natural instinct, no charity of outward show or artificial fabric, no charity but that which is the genuine, spontaneous, untainted product of a profound personal attachment to the Saviour, will meet the requirements of the Judge. And the more you study the deeds to which he points, and which are here described, the more will you be convinced that a more truthful and delicate test of the presence and power of such an attachment could not have been selected than that which the performance of such deeds supplies.

Let us turn now for a moment to the sentence passed upon those standing on the left hand of the Judge: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' How striking the antithesis between this and the sentence passed upon the righteous! The 'Come' of the one has its counterpart in the 'Depart' of the other; 'ye blessed,' its counterpart in 'ye cursed.' But it is not, 'ye cursed of my Fa-

ther.' The blessing had come from him. The Son as Judge attributes it to the Father. But the curse comes from another source. The Judge will not connect his Father's name with it. The wicked have drawn down the curse upon their own heads ; its fountainhead is elsewhere than in the bosom of eternal love. The kingdom, upon the inheritance of which the righteous are called to enter, is not spoken of as an everlasting kingdom. There was no need of so describing it ; by its very nature it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, can never be removed. But the fire is called an everlasting fire, to remind us that so long as ever in the bosom of the sinful the fuel for that flame exists, it must burn on, the ever sinning bringing the ever suffering with it in its train. But here again there is a variation of the phrase. In the one case it is a kingdom prepared for the righteous themselves from the foundation of the world ; in the other it is a fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Can we believe this variation to be unintentional and insignificant ? Shall we not gladly accept the truth that lies concealed in it, that God delighteth in mercy, and that judgment is his strange work ?

Then follows the colloquy between the Judge and the condemned, by far the most impressive thing in which, to our eye, being this, that the Judge does not in their case bring forward an opposite and contrasted kind or class of actions to confront with those attributed to the righteous, in order to indicate the presence within of an opposite character, the operation in them of an opposite class of motives. Against the cited deeds of mercy he does not set up as many deeds of selfishness, or unkindness, or cruelty. He puts the whole stress of the condemnatory sentence simply and alone upon the non-performance of the service of love to his brethren, and through them to himself. Had it been a merely moral reckoning with mankind that was intended to be represented here, then surely so much positive evidence on the one side would have been met with so much positive evidence on the other. Had it been meant that all men were to be divided into two classes, and acquitted or condemned according to their respective kindliness or charitableness of disposition and conduct, with whatever accuracy the dividing line be carried throughout the entire mass of mankind, such infinite variety of shades of character and modes of conduct are there that those

nearest to the line on one side would approach so closely to those nearest to it on the other, that it would be very difficult to make out the equity of an adjustment which would raise the one to heaven and consign the other to hell. It is however upon no such principle that the separation is represented here as being conducted. The great, the primary requirement, the presence or the absence of which fixes the position of each class on the right hand or upon the left of the Judge, is love to Christ, likeness unto him, as tested and exhibited in deeds of kindness done unto his poor afflicted, suffering children. Apart from such love, such likeness to the Lord himself, you cannot have the special affection to his brethren. That special affection cannot subsist, without running out into countless acts of compassion, of needful and generous help. As to Christ himself, then, it is not our knowledge, nor our faith, that is to furnish the ground of our being numbered with those who are to stand on the right hand of the Judge. Infinite may be the variety, both in kind and in degree, of the acquaintance with the Saviour's character, the confidence in the Saviour's work. In the multitude that no man can number there be those who saw the day

of Christ afar off, who had but dim perceptions of the personal character and high office executed by the great Redeemer of mankind. In one thing they shall agree : in having hearts linked by the tie of a supreme affection to him in having lives pictured over with those many acts of loving tenderness and tender mercy here so simply and so beautifully portrayed. As to our fellow-men, again, it is not our honesty, our justice, our generosity, our fidelity, our natural benevolence which is to place us on the right hand of the Judge. It is how we have felt, it is how we have acted, towards the afflicted brethren of Jesus. A narrow contracted circle this may appear, yet one round which all the earthly virtues will be found to congregate, finding there the bond that binds them all together as the fruits of the Spirit, and wraps them all in harmonious and beautiful assemblage round the cross of the Crucified. He may be a kind man who is not honest, an honest man who is not meek, a meek man who is not pure, but, take him who feeds the hungry, who clothes the naked, who visits the sick, because of the spirit of Jesus implanted in his own soul, and because of the image of the Saviour seen on them he ministers to—this man's deeds of mercy will not

be limited to that one circle ; ready to show special kindness to those that are of the household of the faith, he will be ready to do good unto all men as God gives him the opportunity. Be not then over-careful, ye who are members of this household, to distinguish among the poor and the afflicted who are daily appealing to your benevolence, who do and who do not belong to Christ. If so, you may be putting it out of your power to join in the language put into the lips of the righteous, ‘ Lord, when saw we thee an hungered ? ’ Cultivate that large diffusiveness of pity and of help, that would, if it could, feed all the hungry, and give drink to all the thirsty, leave none who wanted unvisited and unrelieved. ‘ Be not forgetful,’ said the apostle, ‘ to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.’ Angel footsteps no longer tread on earth, angels come not now to our tent-doors. For angels clothed in human forms we may no longer, as the patriarchs did, spread the table and lay out the food. But a greater than angels walks among us, in suffering, in disguise. Christ himself is here,—here in some hungry one to be fed, some imprisoned one to be visited, some afflicted one to be comforted. Be not forgetful to

let your sympathy and help range over the whole field of suffering humanity ; here and there you may be succoring your Saviour un-awares ; you may be pleasing him who identifies himself with all his needy suffering children, and who will be ready at last to say, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.'

XV.

THE WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET.*

Thursday.

JESUS sat down upon the Mount of Olives, over against the Temple ; and as the shadows of evening deepened in the valley of Kedron, and crept up its sides, he addressed to his wondering disciples the parables and prophecies preserved in the 24th and 25 chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel. It was after he had finished all these sayings, either before he rose from his seat on the hill-side, or on his way out afterwards to the village, that he said to his disciples, ' Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.' He had previously in his discourse been dealing with a broad and distant future, been sketching the world's history, describing its close,—giving no dates,

* Matt. xxvi. 1-5, 14-19 ; Mark xiv. 1, 2, 11-17 ; Luke xxii 1-30 ; John xiii. 1-20.

leaving much as to the sequence of events shadowy and undefined. Now he turns to a nearer future, to an event that was to happen to himself; and in terms free of all indistinctness and ambiguity he announces that the day after the next he would be betrayed, and afterwards crucified.

It may have been about the very time that Christ himself was speaking thus of his impending betrayal and crucifixion, that a secret session of the Sanhedrim was assembling, not in its usual Hall of meeting, which formed part of the Temple buildings, but in the house of Caiaphas, which tradition has located on the Hill of Evil Counsel, the height rising on the other side of the city from the Mount of Olives, across the valley of Hinnom. To this house of Caiaphas, wherever it was situated, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people now resorted to hold their secret conclave. They met in chafed and angry mood. For three consecutive days Jesus had been denouncing and defying them, in the most open manner, in the most public places. They had tried all their art to weaken his reputation, to put him wrong with the people or with their rulers, to extort from him some saying that might be-

tray ignorance or involve blasphemy or treason. They had been more than defeated ; their own weapons had been turned against themselves ; the bitterest humiliation had been inflicted on them. There was but one remedy. They must meet this man in the Temple courts no more. Never again must they allow themselves to be dragged into personal collision with him. There was but one seal for lips like his—the seal of death, and the sooner it were imposed the better. They had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that he must die. But as old and practiced politicians, who knew the people well, they hesitated as to the time and manner of taking and killing him. An open arrest at this particular time, when there were in and around Jerusalem such crowds of ignorant country-people, among them such numbers of those fiery-spirited Galileans, over whom Jesus had acquired so great an apparent mastery, would be perilous in the last degree. And so, curbing their wrath, they think it better to bide a while, and they said, ‘Not at the feast time, lest there be an uproar among the people.’ Whatever pain the self-restraint may have cost them was more than overcome by the joy they felt when Judas came and said,

‘What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?’ A hopeful sign this in their eyes : one of this man’s bosom friends turning against him, having some good ground, no doubt, they think, to hate him, as he evidently does. He can do for them the very thing they want : put it in their power to seize Jesus in one of his secret haunts, come upon him ‘in the absence of the multitude.’ And he is quite willing, obviously, to meet their wishes. Nor is he hard to bargain with. They offer him thirty silver shekels, the fixed price in the old law of the life of a servant, somewhere between three and four pounds of our money. He accepts the offer, and it is agreed between them that this sum shall be given him on his delivery of Jesus into their hands. Neither he nor they at first imagine that this would be done so speedily—even during the approaching feast.

A baser piece of treachery, a fouler compact, there has never been. Judas may not have been an utterly false man from the very beginning of his attachment to Christ’s person ; it may not have been pure and simple selfishness and greed that tempted him to join the ranks of Christ’s disciples. Once however, admitted, to his own great surprise perhaps, among the

twelve, and intrusted with the care of the small common fund which they possessed, the low base spirit that was in him led him into all kinds of selfish and covetous speculations and anticipations. As our Lord's career ran on, it became more and more apparent that little room for indulging these would be given. Disappointment grew into discontent. In the loving, pure, unearthly, unselfish, good and holy Jesus, there was nothing to attract, there was much to repel. The closer the contact the more that repellent power was felt. Already, toward the close of the second year of his attachment to Christ's person, he had said or done something to draw from the reticent lips of his Master the declaration, 'Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil?''* Still later, his Master's whole bearing, speech, and conduct, his retiring from the crowd, his courting solitude, the deep shades of sadness on his countenance, his beginning to tell his disciples privately, but plainly, that he was about to be taken from them, that a shameful and cruel death was about to be inflicted on him, all this, little as Judas, in common with

* John vi. 70.

the rest, may have understood or realized the actual issue that was impending, ran utterly counter to all his plans and hopes. Upon disappointment, discontent, alienation, and disgust may have supervened, and in so ill a mood may Judas then have been, that the rebuke a few days before at Bethany, when he had interposed his remark about the box of precious ointment, had galled him to the uttermost, and whetted his spirit even to the keen edge of malice and revenge. That all this may have been so does not interfere with the belief that in the final stages of his treachery, other motives besides those of personal malice and pure greed may have entered into his heart and taken their share in prompting to the last black deed that has stamped his name with infamy.

It would not appear that in the compact as at first made between Judas and the Sanhedrim, there was any stipulation as to time. His offer would facilitate a secret and safe arrest of Jesus, but it may not have at once and entirely allayed their fears as to attempting this arrest during the feast. The conditions settled as to the thing to be done, and the bribe to be paid

for the doing of it, they part, leaving it to Judas to find his own time and opportunity.

And now in the current of a narrative, which, ever since our Lord's arrival in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, has been getting quicker and more disturbed, there is a stop, a stillness. The troubled waters sink for a season out of sight, to rise again darker and more vexed than ever. On the Tuesday evening Jesus retired to Bethany, and we see nothing, know nothing of him for the next day and a half. The intervening Wednesday would, no doubt, be given to quiet and repose. There are hollows in our own Arthur Seat not as far from Edinburgh as Bethany was from Jerusalem, in which one feels as far away from the noise and bustle of city life as if in the heart of the Highlands. Such was the hollow in which the favorite village lay, and there, in occupations unknown to us, this one peaceful day was spent, and there at night he had where to lay his head for his last sleep before his death—the night and day recruiting him in body and in spirit for Gethsemane and the Cross.

On the Thursday afternoon he once more bent his steps towards the holy city. He was to celebrate that evening the Passover with his

disciples. Much in the way of preparation had to be done,—the selection of a suitable apartment, the killing of the lamb, the providing of the bread, the wine, and the salad of bitter herbs. Nothing as yet had been arranged, and there was now but little time to spare. The disciples come to him saying, ‘Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?’ Our Lord does not send them all at random to do the best they could; he singles out Peter and John. Though often singularly and closely associated afterwards, this, I believe, was the only time that Christ separated them from all the rest, and gave them a conjunct task to perform. In sending them before the others, he could easily and at once have indicated where the room was in which they were to meet in the evening. Instead of this he gives them a sign, the following of which was to conduct them to it. This way of ordering it, whatever was its real purpose, served effectually to conceal from the others the locality of the guest-chamber, and may have been meant to keep the traitor in the meantime in ignorance of a fact, his earlier knowledge of which, communicated to the chief priests, might have precipitated the ca-

tastrophe, and cut off Gethsemane from our Saviour's passion.

'Go into the city, and when you enter there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?' Upon these Passover occasions the inhabitants of the metropolis opened their houses freely to strangers coming up from the country; but was there no danger, if it were known that this accommodation was required for him whose life the authorities were seeking, that it might be denied? The singular message which Peter and John were to deliver would reveal the very thing which, left to their own discretion, they might have wished to hide, for could two men in Galilean garb and with Galilean accent speak of the Master and his disciples, and it not be known of whom they spoke? Coming from such a quarter, carrying with it such a tone of authority, being, in fact, a command rather than a request, might not the goodman of the house be offended and refuse? The instructions, however, are precise, and Peter and John follow them. All

happens as Christ had indicated. They go into the city, they meet the man with the pitcher, they follow him, they deliver the message, and whether it was that the man himself was a disciple of Jesus, or that he was otherwise influenced, not only is there a ready and cordial compliance on his part, but, when Peter and John are shown into the apartment, they find it, as was not always the case, already furnished and prepared. It was a momentous meeting which on this last night of our Redeemer's life was to take place in this room, one never to be forgotten, to be had in memory by generation after generation, through all the after history of the Church; and everything about it, even to the indicating of the place and the providing of the needful furniture, was matter of divine foresight and care.

The accounts of the different Evangelists are so broken and confused that it is impossible to give anything like a regular connected narrative of what happened that night within the guest-chamber. At an early stage a strife broke out among the apostles as to which of them should be accounted the greatest. This may have happened after the Passover celebration had commenced. The first thing done,

when the company had assembled and sat down, was to pass round a cup of wine, the first of the four that were circulated in the course of the feast. If it was in doing so that they were uttered, then our Lord's first words after sitting down were those: 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.'* Never before had they sat down in such a formal manner with their Master at their head. The circumstance of taking their places around this board suggests to their narrow minds thoughts of the places and the dignities that, as they fancied, were afterwards to be theirs; and when, almost as soon as he had sat down, Jesus began to speak of the kingdom as if he was just about to enter on it, the strife as to which of them should be greatest in that kingdom arose.

But this strife has been attributed to another

* Luke xxii. 15-18.

origin, one which links it in a manner so natural to the washing of the disciples' feet as to predispose us to adopt it. The master of the house had relinquished for the strangers the best apartment of his dwelling, and furnished it as well as he could. There was one duty of the host, however, that he failed to discharge. He did not personally receive the guests, nor preside at the washing of the feet, which always preceded the beginning of a feast. He and his family and his domestics were all themselves elsewhere engaged in the keeping of the Passover. He saw that in the room the necessary apparatus for the washing, the basin and the water and the towel, were all provided, but he left it to the guests themselves to see that it was done. But which of the twelve will do it for the others? It is the office of the servant, the slave; which of them will acknowledge that he stands in any such relationship to the rest? Besides the settlement of their respective places around the table, here was another root of bitterness springing up to trouble, raising the question of precedency among them.

Spring up how it might, we have the fact that around the first communion-table among

the apostles, in presence of their Master, in the critical and solemn position in which he and they stood, there was actually a quarrel about their individual rights and privileges ; a petty ambition, the love of place and power, finding its way into the hearts of those most honored of the Lord, entering to defile the most sacred season and solemnity. There is some excuse for the twelve untaught Galilean fishermen, with all their vulgar conceptions at this time of what was coming when their Master's kingdom should be instituted. But what shall we say of those who have had the full light of the after revelations given, and who, in front of our Lord's most solemn declaration that his kingdom is not of this world, that the kind of authority and lordship that kings and princes assume and exercise would not have place within his Church, under the garb of a glowing zeal, harbor as strong a love of place and power, as much vanity and pride, as much irritation of temper, as much severity and uncharitableness, as is ever to be seen in the world of common life ? Alas for the strife of the first communion-table ! Alas for the strifes and debates of almost every ecclesiastical body which since the days of Jesus Christ has been embodied in his name. You

might have thought that in those churches where the distinctions were the fewest and of the least value, where there was least of that kind of food upon which the pride and vanity and ambition of our nature feed, there would have been proportionally less of their presence and power. The fact, I think, rather lies the other way, for a reason not difficult to divine.

None of the twelve would do the part of the minister or the servant to the others ; and so, grumbling among themselves, they sit down with unwashed feet. Jesus rises from the table, lays aside his upper garment, pours water into the basin, takes the towel, girds himself with it, and begins himself to do what none of them would undertake. One of the first before whose feet the Saviour stooped may have been Judas. We shall see presently that he had thrust himself into a seat very near to, if not the next to that of Christ. He allows his feet to be washed, not without a certain strange feeling in heart, but without word spoken or remonstrance made. But when Jesus approaches Peter, the impetuous apostle cannot remain silent.' 'Lord,' he says, lost in wonder, full of reverence, profoundly sensible of the great gulf that separated himself and all the rest from Jesus,—'Lord, dost thou

wash my feet?' He gets the calm reply, 'What I do thou knowest not now;'—'thou hast not yet discerned—though it needed no quick eye to see it—the purpose of my act; but thou shalt know hereafter, shalt know presently.' But the impatient apostle will not submit and wait. Strong in his sense of the unseemliness, the unsuitableness of the act, fancying that the very love and reverence he bore to Jesus forbade him to permit it, he declares, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me,' is Christ's reply,—a single slender beam of light upon the darkness, enough to point to some higher spiritual meaning of the act, not enough to reveal the whole significance of the transaction to Peter's mind, but quite enough to turn at once into quite an opposite channel the current of his feelings. 'No part with thee if thou wash me not!—then, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' Taking up once more his act in its symbolic character, as representative of the spiritual washing by regeneration, Jesus saith to him, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' For even as he who in the ordinary roadway cleanses himself from outward defile-

ment is clean every whit, and needs no after washing save that of the feet—for go where he may upon the dusty roads, every hour, and at all times, the feet are being soiled and need renewed, repeated washings,—so is it true of him who hath gone down into the great laver, and washed all sins away in the blood of the atonement, that he is clean every whit, has all his sins forgiven, all the guilt of them removed, and needs no after washing, saving that which consisteth in the removal of the daily stains that are ever afresh, by our converse with this world being contracted. ‘And ye are clean,’ added Jesus, ‘but not all.’ The words, but faintly understood, yet so calmly and authoritatively uttered, effect their immediate object. Peter silently submits; the work goes on; the circle is completed. The feet of all are washed, no one after Peter venturing to resist or remonstrate.

The feet washing in the guest-chamber by our Lord himself we are inclined to regard as the greatest instance of his humiliation as a man in the common intercourse of life, in the discharge of its ordinary duties. He was at pains himself to guard it against misinterpretation: ‘So, after he had washed their feet, and had

taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am.' It was his being so infinitely their superior that lent its grace and full significance to the act. And this superiority, so far from cloaking, or with false humility pretending to disown, he asserts. This is what makes the whole ministry of our Lord on earth so utterly unlike that of any other man who has ever trodden it. No one ever made pretensions so high ; no one ever executed offices so humble. No one ever claimed to stand so far above the ordinary level of our humanity ; speaking of himself as the light of the world, having rest and peace and life for all at his disposal, to dispense as truly royal gifts to all who owned him as their spiritual King. No one ever made himself more thoroughly one with every human being whom he met, or was so ready with all the services that in his need one man may claim from his brother.

'If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you.' With that greatest of all examples before us, what

act, what office of human kindness naturally laid upon us should we ever count too low, too mean,—should we shrink from, because of any idea that it would be a humiliating of ourselves before our fellow men to undertake it? It is indeed an utter mistaking of this example to suppose that it calls us to a repetition of the very act of Christ. Only if there be feet needing to be washed, which the custom of the time and country requires to be so, while there is no one else upon whom the duty properly devolves, only then does the example of Jesus call to a literal imitation of what he did. His own acts stands before us not as a model act to be exactly copied, but as an act representative to us of the whole circle of kindly offices that we are called upon to render to one another, and as illustrative of the humble self-denying spirit in which all these offices should be discharged. You are all aware that, on each returning Maundy Thursday, the day before Easter, the Pope washes the feet of twelve poor men. A better comment has never been made upon the act than the one made long ago by Bengel. ‘In our day,’ he says, ‘popes and princes imitate the feet-washing to the letter, but a greater subject for admiration would be, for instance, a

Pope in unaffected humility washing the feet of one king (his own equal in rank, and so the exact analogue to the disciples' mutual washing of each other as brethren), than the feet of twelve paupers.' So true were the Saviour's words that went to indicate the difficulty which lay in a faithful following of the example that he had just been setting,—'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' So easy is it to violate the spirit by sticking to the letter of a precept ; so easy for pride to take the form of humility.

XVI.

THE EXPOSURE OF JUDAS.*

Thursday.

THE four Evangelists agree in stating that it was upon a Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, that our Lord rose from the grave, and that it was on the day preceding this Sabbath that he was crucified. They all assign the same events to the same days of the week : the last supper to Thursday evening, the crucifixion to Friday, the lying in the tomb to Saturday, the resurrection to Sunday. But there is a marked discrepancy in the accounts of the three earlier Evangelists as compared with that of St. John, as to the relation of these days of the week to the Jewish days of the month and of the feast. If we had only the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and

* Matt. xxvi. 21-25 ; Mark xiv. 18-21 ; Luke xxii. 21-23 ; John xiii. 21-35

St. Luke before us, we must at once have concluded that our Lord partook of the Passover supper at the same time with the Jews. On the other hand, if we had only the narrative of St. John before us, we should as naturally have concluded that it was upon the evening after the crucifixion, that the Paschal supper was observed generally by the Jews, and that Jesus must have antedated his observance of it, partaking of it a day before the usual one, on the evening of the 13th day of the month Nisan. The removal of this discrepancy is one of the most difficult problems with which harmonists of the Gospels have had to deal, nor is there any single question touching the chronology of our Saviour's life upon which more labor and learning have been bestowed. The success has not been equal to the pains bestowed. The matter still remains in doubt. No doubt whatever exists as to the fact, that, whether he anticipated the ordinary time or not, it was that he might observe the Jewish Passover with his disciples, that our Lord, on the night of his betrayal, sat down with his twelve apostles in the guest-chamber at Jerusalem.

In the Paschal supper, as then observed

(and we cannot well imagine that our Lord would deviate to any great degree from the customary manner of its observance), four, and on some occasions five, cups of wine were circulated among the guests, marking different stages of the feast. When the company, which ordinarily was not less than ten, nor more than twenty,* had assembled and ranged themselves round the tables, the first cup of wine was filled, and the head of the family (for we are to look upon this ordinance as essentially a family gathering) pronounced a blessing on the feast and on the cup, using the expression, 'Praise be to thee, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine.' After the blessing, the cup was passed round, and the hands were washed. The bitter herbs dipped in vinegar were then placed upon the table, and a portion of them eaten in remembrance of the sorrows of the Egyptian bondage. After this the other Paschal dishes were brought in : the charoseth or sop, a liquid compounded of various fruits and mingled with wine or vinegar, into which pieces of bread were dipped ; the cake of unleavened bread ; and finally the

* It might be one hundred, if each could have a piece of the lamb as large as an olive.

roasted lamb placed before the head of the company. Then followed the questions and explanations put and given in accordance with the instructions of Moses: 'And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.*' They sang then together the first part of the Hallel or song of praise, embracing the 113th and 114th Psalms, and the second cup of wine was drunk. Then began the feast proper: the householder, taking two small loaves, breaking one of them in two, laying the pieces upon the whole loaf, wrapping the whole in bitter herbs, dipping it in the sop, and eating it, with the words, 'This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in Egypt.' Next came the blessing upon each kind of food as it was partaken of, the Paschal lamb being eaten last, and the third cup, called the cup of blessing, was drunk. The remainder of the Hallel, the Psalms from the 115th to the 118th, were sung or chanted, with

* Exodus xii. 26, 27.

which the celebration ordinarily concluded. Occasionally a fifth cup was added, and what was called the Great Hallel (Psalms cxx.-cxxxvii.) was repeated.

It was after the strife and the feet-washing, and coincident with the circulation of the first of these Passover cups, that our Lord used the words recorded in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the 22d chapter of St. Luke: 'And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Clear before the Saviour's eye were all the scenes of the impending midnight hour in the garden, the next forenoon in the judgment-hall, the afternoon upon the cross. He stood touching the very edge of these great sufferings. The baptism that he had to be baptized with was now at hand—and how was he straitened till it was accomplished!—a few quiet hours lay between him and his entrance into the cloud. With a desire more earnest and vehement than on any other occasion, he wished to spend those hours with his apostles,—to take his last leave of them,—to give his farewell instructions to them. He had never before partaken of the Passover with them. He desired to do it this once. He knew that it could

never be repeated. He knew that this was virtually the last Jewish Passover, that with the offering up of himself in the great sacrifice of the following day that long line of Passover celebrations that had run now through fifteen hundred years, down from the night in Egypt when the first-born were slain, was to be brought to its close. He knew that all which this rite prefigured was then to be fulfilled, and that that fulfillment was to issue in the erection of a spiritual kingdom, in which other kind of tables were to be spread, and other kind of wine to be drunk. 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.' Emphatic here the double repetition of the words, 'for I say unto you,'—calling special attention to the words that followed. Responding to this call, we fix our thoughts upon these words; but beyond the intimation they contain of that being our Lord's last Passover, and of his speedy entering

into an estate altogether higher, yet in some respects alike, they remain almost as mysterious to us as they must have been to those who heard them for the first time at the supper-table.

In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus had said, 'Ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*' So early, from the very first, did the thought of Judas and his meditated deed press upon the Saviour's spirit. When the washing of feet was over, and Jesus sat down, and the repast began, they all noticed that there was a cloud upon their Master's countenance, and the disciple who, sitting next to him, could best read the expression of his face, saw that he 'was troubled in spirit.' What was vexing him? what was marring the joy of such a meeting? They are not left long in doubt as to the cause. Christ breaks the silence into which, in the sadness of his spirit, he had fallen: he speaks in tone and manner quite different from that of his ordinary colloquial address. And he 'testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you which eateth with me shall betray me!' Be-

* John xiii. 10, 11.

tray him! how? for what? to what? Betray such a Master at such a time! Bad enough for any common disciple to use the means and opportunities that acquaintance gave to effect his ruin; but for one of them, his own familiar friends, whom he has drawn so closely round his person, upon whom he had lavished such affection,—for one of those admitted to this most sacred of meals, the holiest seal of the nearest earthly bond; for one of the twelve to betray him! No wonder, as the thought of all the guilt which such an act involved sprung up within their breasts, that they should be, as they were, ‘exceeding sorrowful;’ that they should look ‘one on another, doubting of whom he spake,’—fixing searching looks on all round, to see whether any countenance showed the confusion of felt guilt, that, after inquiring among themselves which of them it was that ‘should do this thing,’ they should begin, ‘every one of them, to say unto him, one by one, Is it I? and another, Is it I? You like the men who met such an announcement in such a way. You like them, for the burning sense of shame they show at the very thought of there being one among them capable of such a deed. You like them for the strong desire

that each man shows to clear himself from the charge. You like them for the prompt appeal that each man makes to Jesus. Above all, you like them that there is none so bold and over-confident, not even Peter, as at once to think and say of himself that there was no possibility it could be he, but that all, not without some secret wonder and self-distrust, put in turn the question, 'Lord, is it I?' All but one! He did not at first dare to put this question to his Master. In the confusion, his having omitted to do so would not be noticed. He had returned look for look, as they at first scanned each other; no face calmer or less confused; no one suspecting Judas.

To the many questions coming so eagerly from all sides and ends of the table, Jesus made the general reply: 'He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.' Had there been but one vessel containing the Paschal sauce into which all dipped, this would have been nothing more than a repetition of the first announcement that it was one of them now eating with him at the same table that should betray him. But if, as we have every reason to believe, there were more than one dish upon the table, this second

saying of our Lord would limit the betrayal to that smaller circle of which he was himself the centre,—the three or four all of whom dipped into the same vessel. Within that circle was Judas, who, when he heard the terrible words that followed, ‘The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born,’ whether from the circle having been drawn so much the narrower taking him in among the few, one of whom must be the man, or from the look of his Master being fixed on him, the spell of which he could not resist, or from the very burden and terror of a denunciation which sent a thrill through every heart, could no longer remain silent, but said to Jesus, as the others had done before : ‘Master, is it I?’ Jesus said unto him : ‘Thou hast said ;’ that is, ‘Yes, thou art the man.’

We have the express testimony of the fourth Evangelist that no man at the table but himself knew for what purpose Judas at last went out, that none of them at this time suspected him as the betrayer. No man at the table then could have heard that answer of our Lord ; a thing that we can scarcely imagine how it

could be, but by supposing that Judas lay upon the seat immediately next to Jesus on the one side, as John lay upon the one nearest to him on the other. Assuming this, Jesus might easily have spoken to one so near in such an under tone, that none could overhear.

Let us imagine now, that close to Judas, on the same side, or one or two off from John, upon the other side, Peter was sitting, and the last incident in the strange story becomes intelligible. None have heard our Saviour's specific designation of the traitor to himself. The terrible malediction, however, pronounced upon him has whetted their curiosity to know who he is. Peter sees that John is the most likely one to find it out. If the Master will tell it to any one, it will be to him, he couching so close to Jesus that he has only to throw back his head for it to rest upon his Master's bosom. Into his ear, therefore, any secret may be easily and safely whispered. As Peter is so placed that he cannot well do it otherwise without his object revealing itself, by signs rather than by words he tells John to ask. John does so, and gets an answer that was specific and unambiguous ; one, however, that no one at table but himself could have had any knowledge of.

‘He it is,’ said Jesus, ‘to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Two men of the twelve now knew to whom the Lord referred,—Judas, on the one side, to whom Jesus had directly said, ‘Thou art the man,’ and John, now, on the other, to whom the sign was as explicit as any words could be, a sign, however, only to John himself, the others not having heard the words that gave the act its meaning. The giving of the sop to him decided the course of the betrayer. ‘That thou doest,’ said Jesus to him, ‘do quickly.’ He rose and went out immediately ; and it was night. And into that night he went carrying a blacker night within his own dark breast. And now, how are we to interpret this striking passage in the history of our Lord ?

1. This exposure and denunciation of the traitor may have been one of the needful steps in the accomplishment of the divine designs. Judas had already made a compact with the chief priests to deliver Jesus into their hands. But of the time and manner of that deliverance nothing had been said. As to these, nothing had been resolved on. We may well believe

that Judas entered the guest-chamber without any premeditated purpose of executing his design that night. The discovery, however, that his Master already knew all that he had done, all that he meant to do, the judgment passed, the terrible woe denounced on him, instead of checking him in his career, served but to spur him on, and form within him, and fix the purpose to go and do that very night the thing he had engaged to do. Operating in this way, what was said and done by Jesus may have contributed to the accomplishment within the appointed time of the predetermined counsel and purpose of the Most High.

2. We have Christ's own authority for saying that one of his reasons for acting as he did toward Judas was to afford to the other apostles an evidence of his Messiahship. 'I speak not of you all,' he had said ; 'I know whom I have chosen ; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.' Had nothing been said beforehand by Jesus, had everything ran the course it did, their Master remaining apparently in profound ignorance of how his arrest in the

garden was to be brought about, then to the apostles' eyes this mystery would have hung around the whole procedure, that Jesus had been deceived, had suffered a traitor to enter unknown and undetected into the innermost circle of his friends, had fallen by an unexpected blow from the hand of one fancied to be friendly. As it was, what a proof had the apostles set before their eyes, that Jesus knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell him what was in man. None of them had distrusted Judas. He could have given no patent proof of his false-heartedness. He had kept up the appearance of true friendship to the last, so as to deceive every other eye. Yet when all is over, and they recall what their Master had said a year before his death, that one of them was a devil, and remember especially the sayings of the guest-chamber, how vividly would the conviction come home to the minds of the apostles, that they had to do with one from whom no secrets were hidden, before whose all-seeing eye every heart lay naked and bare !

3. Let us see here an exhibition of the humanity of Jesus, his being truly one of us, with all the common sensibility of our nature,

moral and emotional. There is nothing that the human heart so shrinks from and shudders at as treachery in a friend ; the wearing of a mask, the acceptance of all the tokens and pledges of affection, the profession of admiration, attachment, love, yet deep within coldness, sullenness, selfishness, a waiting for and seeking for opportunity to make gain of the cultivated friendship, and a readiness, when the time comes, to sacrifice the friend on the altar of pride, or covetousness, or ambition. And if Jesus resented the hypocrisy and treachery of Judas, if his spirit recoiled from near contact with the traitor, if when these last hours had come which he wished to spend alone with those he had loved so well and was loving now, if that could be, better than ever the nearer the hour of his departure came,—he felt as if that guest-chamber were defiled by such a presence as that of Judas, and felt burdened and restrained till he was gone, what is this but saying that there beat in him the same heart that beats in all of us, when that heart is right within ? One object of the Saviour in so soon introducing the topic of his betrayal may have been to get rid of a presence felt to be incongruous, felt to be a restraint. He had much to

say that was for the ear of friendship alone. He had to open up his heart in a way that no one would seek to do before the cold and the unsympathizing, much less before the alienated and the hostile. It may have been with the feeling that the sooner he was gone the better, that Jesus said to Judas, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' One thing at least is evident, that it was with a burst of elation and joy, as one escaping from under a dull and heavy pressure that crushed the spirit into sadness, that Jesus spoke to the others instantly on Judas being gone. 'Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you,' and so on throughout all the remainder of the feast he speaks and acts with a free unburdened heart.

4. There is more than the humanity here ; there is the divinity of our Lord. He assumes and exercises the office of the Judge. He is a God to Judas. He takes this man into his hands, and deals with him as none but God had a right to do. I speak not of that knowledge which laid bare to him all that he had in

his heart to do, but of his dooming him as he did ; his pronouncing over him the most terrible sentence that was ever pronounced over a human being on this side eternity : ‘ Woe to that man ; it had been good for that man if he had not been born ! ’ That there was tenderness and pity, infinite pity and infinite tenderness in the heart of Jesus for Judas, who can doubt ? That in dealing with him as he did in the guest-chamber, he was giving him another and last opportunity of repentance I do most thoroughly believe. What way could you take more fitted to turn any man from a crime that you knew he meditated, than the telling him beforehand that you knew all that he intended and had planned to do, and by denouncing the crime contemplated in the strongest terms you could employ ? That a purpose of mercy lay embedded in our Lord’s treatment of Judas is not disproved by the fact, that instead of working anything like repentance, it stirred up the malicious feelings to an intenser activity. That fact, like the thousand others of like kind that are daily, hourly happening in God’s moral government of our race, only shows that the very goodness and grace of the Most High, the wisdom, purity and holiness of his law, are too often turned by

the perverse spirit that is in us into incitements to a bolder and more determined resistance to his authority. The case of Judas, in this stage of it, is but another instance of what is a very common experience, that if a man have once fairly committed himself to a certain course, have resolved to brave all its perils in order to realize its fancied gains, he becomes so self-blinded, so impetuous, so impatient of all check or hindrance, that anything whatever thrown in his way, however fitted in itself to warn and check, becomes but as a goad in the side of a fiery steed, driving him the more fiercely on his career. But is it over one whom mercy and love have followed to the farthest limits, and have been obliged at last to let go, that the fearful sentence is pronounced: 'Woe to that man; it had been better for him that he had never been born!' Does he who says that know it to be true? He can know it only by his being one with God. Has he who pronounces this doom a title to do so? He can have it only by challenging to himself the prerogatives of the Supreme Judge of all mankind.

5. Let us look on with wonder and awe as there is opened here to our view in one of its

depths, the great mystery of this world and of God's wise and holy government of it. 'It had been better for that man that he had never been,'—but why then was he born? A great crime is made to minister to the greatest act and instance of the divine love, yet the criminal is stripped of no part of his guilt. 'The Son of Man goeth as it is written;' that writing is but the expression of the divine will; that will is sovereign, just, and good; yet woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!—human freedom, human agency, human guilt taken up into that vast and complicated machinery by which the counsels of the Most High God are carried out. 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' 'Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.'

After Judas left the room, our Lord said, 'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so say I now to you.' The words struck upon Peter's ear, and set his quick spirit working. Another intimation this of some mysterious movement about to be made. Keeping the words before him, so soon as a convenient pause occurred, Peter said unto Jesus, 'Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.' The answer should have satisfied him,—should have repressed at least the curiosity which it was obviously not Christ's purpose to satisfy. But the pertinacious apostle will not accept the mild rebuke that it contains; he will still go on, be still more urgent. He had already got one check at the feet-washing, from which it cost him little to recover. He may have been somewhat tremulous when with the rest he put the question to Jesus, 'Lord, is it I?' But he has recovered himself, and is ready now to say almost anything to his Master, almost anything of himself. 'Lord,' he replies, 'why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for

thy sake.' Let us do Peter the justice to believe that this was not altogether a vain and empty boast; let us believe that if his Master's life had been threatened by open violence he would have stood by him to the last, and perilled or lost his own life in his defence. He was one of the two who, strangely enough, perhaps suspecting something from the temper of the rulers, had brought a sword with him into the guest-chamber. And he proved in the garden that he was ready to meet the risks that the use of that weapon brought with it. It was in another kind of courage than the physical one that he was to prove himself so bankrupt. Still there was no small measure of presumption in his being so free with the expression of his readiness to lay down his life, a presumption which Jesus met by saying first, with gentle irony, 'Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?' and then adding, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow' (the time of the cock-crowing, a division of the Jewish night, shall not be past), 'till thou hast denied me thrice.'

The feast goes on. Some unrecorded observation has been made by Peter in the name of the others as well as of himself, when our

Lord turns to him and says, 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you;' to have you all (the word here used took in the others as well as Peter), 'that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,'—another and most impressive warning which should have sent his thoughts into another channel, but he is back again to his first position. Jesus had said nothing open of any peril to himself, but the apostle cannot get it out of his thoughts. 'Lord,' he says, 'I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death.' He gets in answer the same distinct prediction, that before the dawn he should thrice deny his Lord.

The feast is over. They are on the way out to Gethsemane, when Jesus says to the group around him, 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.' There was nothing to call for Peter's intervention here. But he cannot be silent; he must step forward and put himself above all the others. 'Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.' Once more, for the third time, the

prediction of his three denials is rung in his ears, but with no effect. 'But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. Likewise also said they all.' Yet within an hour they all had fled, and within three hours the three denials had taken place. How are we to look upon so singular a display of such sustained, reiterated, most obstinate, and boastful self-confidence? Something we must attribute to the excitement of the occasion, but more to the natural temper of the man. The last few days had been swelling the tide of Pharisaic indignation as it rose around Jesus in the Temple, till its proudest, darkest waves seemed ready to burst upon and swallow him up. New and strange impressions of some great impending calamity, which all their Master's words and actions deepened, seized upon the apostles. There were some quiet hours for him and them in the guest-chamber: but calm as he was there was a mournfulness in their Master's calmness, as if he sat under the shadow of some terrible catastrophe, and such a constant throwing out of hints as to its approach, that one can well believe that the spirits of the apostles were wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, so

that whatever each man had in him of weakness or of strength, was just in the condition to come out in all its fullness ; and so in all its fullness came out that rash, presumptuous, over-trustfulness in self, in which lay Peter's peculiar weakness.

But something, too, we must attribute to another agency, which took advantage of all the excitement of the occasion, and wrought upon the temper of the man. I have already spoken of the evidence which, within the walls of this supper-chamber, Jesus gave of his eye being one that could see into the future of earthly events. But now the proof meets us of that eye being one that pierces beyond the bounds of the outward and earthly, scans the secrets of the world of spirits, and sees all that is there going on. It is but a glimpse he gives us of what he knew and saw ; but how strange, how awful, how full of warning, how full of encouragement, that glimpse ! Looking at the scene in the supper-chamber with the eye of sense, you see twelve men with their Master at their head, in trying, startling circumstances ; first one and then another acting out their natural dispositions and characters. Looking with the eye of faith as Jesus lifts the veil, you see Sa-

tan tempting, Jesus praying, the Father leaving, the sifting suffered, the son of perdition lost, the boastful disciple tried, his fall permitted, the invisible shield held over him,—his faith not suffered wholly to fail, his very fall turned to good account, and he by it made all the fitter to be a comforter and strengthener of others.

Such was the first communion-table : around it the play of these spiritual agencies ; by the men who sat at it the exhibitions of such weakness, presumption, guilt,—one betraying, one denying, all forsaking. With such a spectacle before our eyes let us not be high-minded, but fear. We come to our tables of communion with the same weak nature that was in Judas, and Peter, and the rest ; and Satan may be ready to enter into our heart and may be desirous to have us that he may sift us as wheat. The nearer we stand to Jesus, the greater his efforts to throw the snare around our feet by which our fall may be effected. Let the self-ignorance and want of faith and failure in attachment that all the twelve showed that night shine as a beacon before our eyes, and under a trembling sense of our own weakness and liability to forsake or deny, or even to be-

tray our Master, let us cast ourselves upon him, that for us, too, he may pray the Father, that in the coming hours of trial our faith fail not, but that through all of temptation and danger that yet awaits us in this world we may be safely borne, through the might of his strengthening presence, and to the praise of his great name.

XVII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.*

Thursday.

LET us imagine that one previously ignorant of the history of our religion were to set himself, in the first instance, to investigate the origin of the institution of the Lord's Supper. The fact that the entire Christian Church, however its various sections may otherwise differ, all agree in observing this rite, is before his eyes, and he finds upon inquiry that it has done so for many generations past. Guided simply by the lights of common history, he ascertains that as far back as till about 130 years after the time when Christ is said to have lived, there was a society calling itself by his name, in which this ordinance was kept. There is then put into his hand a copy of the New Testament, in which an account of its first institution is given. He

* Matt. xxvi. 26-29 ; Mark xiv. 22-55 ; Luke xxii. 19-20 ; 1st Cor. xi. 23-25.

finds in this book, however, so much that is extraordinary, that he is disposed at first to be incredulous,—incredulous, among other things, as to this account. Might not this rite have taken its rise somewhat differently, at some after period, the narrative contrived and adapted by those who wished to bestow upon it as interesting a birth as possible? A slight reflection resolves this difficulty. How could the men of any after period, say fifty or a hundred years after the death of Christ, begin then for the first time to keep a rite which bore upon the very front of it that it was kept in obedience to a command of the Saviour given on the night before he died? Had this command not been given at that time, and had the observance not at that time commenced, one cannot see how, without a falsehood in their hands which they could not but detect, any body of men could at any posterior period have commenced the celebration. Besides, it is expressly asserted in the Acts of the Apostles that the first disciples of Jesus did actually begin the breaking of bread in remembrance of their Master a few days after the resurrection, and continued it weekly thereafter. How could a record containing such a statement have been at any subse-

quent time foisted upon the faith of those who had never before seen or heard of such an ordinance? It would have been utterly impossible to have gained credit for a narrative containing such a statement, had the statement not in point of fact been true.

Simply and by itself, therefore, the continuous observance of this sacred ordinance carries with it a separate and independent proof that it must have commenced at the time specified in the Gospel narrative. Assuming, then, that narrative as authentic, as being a trustworthy account of what was said and done by Jesus Christ within the chamber where he assembled with the twelve, what might such an inquirer as we have imagined gather from that narrative alone, and without going beyond its limits, as to the character of Christ?

1. Would he not be struck with the manifold evidence given within the compass of these few hours of the prescience of Jesus, his minute foreknowledge of the future? All throughout he speaks and acts as one who knew that this was to be his parting interview with the men around him, his last meeting with them before his death. He knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the

Father. He spoke of that departure as at hand. Externally there was nothing to indicate that his death was so near, that his body was so soon to be broken, his blood to be shed. Such private information might have been conveyed to him as to the plans and purposes of the rulers, and of the compact of the betrayer with them, as to satisfy him that the earliest opportunity would be taken to cut him off. A presentiment that his end was near might thus have been created, but such a presentiment could not have exhibited the clearness and the certainty of that conviction upon which he acted. Besides, it was not his own future alone which was mapped out so distinctly before his eye. It was the future, near and remote, of every man around him. He tells Judas beforehand that he was to betray him, Peter that he was to deny him, the whole of them that they were that night to be offended at him and forsake him, that he was to be left alone. Looking still further on, he dimly intimates to Peter that in his death he was to resemble his Master, and distinctly tells the rest that for a little while they should be sorrowful, but that their sorrow should be turned into joy ; that the time was coming when they should be put out of the

synagogues, and that whosoever killed them should think that he did God service. Three times in the course of his addresses, whilst pre-announcing one or another of these events, he emphatically declares that he told them these things beforehand, that when all came to pass they might remember that he had told them, and believe that he was the Messiah promised to their fathers. Pondering over the form and manner of the evidence thus afforded of Christ's prescience, might not our inquirer say, Surely a greater than any of the old prophets is here! Their knowledge of the future was derived from another, was communicated as so derived. It was as the Lord revealed that they declared and described. To their eye there was so much light upon the future as God was pleased to throw upon it, but all around was darkness. They never assumed, and they never exercised, a power of foreknowing and foretelling in their own name, and without any limits. But here is one upon whom the power sits easily, as a natural inherent gift, who exercises it without token of its being in any way limited, without any recognition of his indebtedness to another for the foresight he displays.

2. Opening his mind and heart to the first

impressions of the scene, our inquirer could not fail to be greatly struck with the strong considerate affection shown by Jesus to his disciples. There hangs around the incidents and sayings of the upper chamber the touching and tender interest which attaches to the last words and acts of the dying. When a man knows that he is speaking to his family or friends around him for the last time, that it is his last opportunity of addressing to them words of counsel and encouragement, what a solemnity attaches to the interview ! And if he be a man of ardent affections, what love and sympathy will breathe out in his parting words ! The world of common life is not void of instances in which men so placed have risen to a heroic height of self-forgetfulness, and have spent their last moments in the effort to comfort and strengthen those they left behind. There is much, however, to distinguish this instance of a parting farewell from all others of a like kind. It is given to no man to foresee his impending sufferings, and the exact manner of his death, as Jesus foresaw them ; nor is it given to any to foresee, as he did, all the after trials of those from whom he was to part. He knows, as he is speaking to the twelve in the guest-chamber, that within an

hour or two he shall be lying in the great agony of the garden ; that he shall never close his eyes again till he closes them in death ; that to-morrow there await him all the mockeries of the judgment-hall, all the shame and suffering of the cross ; that the shades of the next day shall darken round his sepulchre. But the prospect of all this, though so near, so vividly seen, so awfully dark, has not power to withdraw his thoughts from his disciples, or keep him from bestowing upon them those last hours given for earthly intercourse. As he speaks to them his whole heart seems absorbed with the one desire to soothe, to comfort, to warn, to fortify, to encourage. If he speak of his own departure, it is as if the thing about it that grieved him most was, that they should be left exposed to so many difficulties and trials when he was gone. Their very ignorance of what was awaiting them quickens his compassion and gives deeper pathos to his words. As he looks round upon the little flock so soon to be scattered as sheep without a shepherd, the coming history of each rises before his eye. There is James, who so soon is to seal his testimony with his blood ; Peter, who, like his Lord, is to be crucified ; John, who is to be left survivor of them all. How little do

these men know the kind of life that is before them ! How shall he best prepare them for it ? The very frailties and faults that he knew they were to exhibit seem but to have added to the gentleness and tenderness of his love. How else shall we account for the manner in which he speaks of them and to them upon this occasion ? Of them, to his father : 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word ; they have known surely that I came out from thee, they have believed that thou didst send me.' To themselves : 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.' To speak in such a way as this of men who at the time knew so little of the real character of their Master, and had so little faith ; to speak thus of the very men who, instead of continuing with him, were all that very night to forsake him, what shall we say of it but that there was the very rarest exhibition here of that charity which believeth all things, thinketh no evil, hopeth all things ; which, wherever faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard-seed, is genuine ; wherever devotion, though it be weak, is true, --is ready to acknowledge and approve ?

3. After being struck generally with the singular manifestations of a deep-rooted self-forgetting attachment to the twelve shown by Jesus all through this interview, we may imagine the attention of our supposed inquirer to be concentrated upon that act by which he instituted an observance to be kept for ever after in remembrance of him. As the author of a great religious revolution, the head of a great religious society, it is remarkable that this is the one religious ceremony instituted and observed by our Lord himself. After his death and resurrection, he issued the command that, on being enrolled as his followers, all were to be baptized ; but this meeting together, this breaking of bread and drinking of wine in remembrance of him, was the single ordinance that in his lifetime he set up, and by his own first observance hallowed. Is there anything peculiar in his having done so ? There is nothing peculiar certainly in the cherishing and expressing a desire to be remembered when we are gone by those we loved ; nothing peculiar in our leaving behind some remembrancers by which our memory may be kept green and fresh within their hearts. But there is something more here than the expression of such a

desire, the bequeathing of such a remembrance. There is the appointment of a particular mode by which for ever afterwards the remembrance of Christ, and more particularly of his death for them, was to be sustained in the breasts of all his followers. It is common enough in human history to meet with periodical celebrations, anniversaries of the day of their birth, or of their death, held in honor of those who have greatly distinguished themselves by their virtues, their genius, their high services to their country or to mankind. But where except here have we read of any one in his own lifetime originating and appointing the method by which he was to be remembered, himself presiding at the first celebration of the rite, and laying as his injunction upon all his followers, regularly to meet for its observance? Who among all those who have been the greatest ornaments of our race, the greatest benefactors of humanity, would ever have risked his reputation, his prospect of being remembered by the ages that were to come, by exhibiting such an eager and premature desire to preserve and perpetuate the remembrance of his name, his character, his deeds? They have left it to others after them to devise the means

for doing so ; neither vain enough, nor bold enough, nor foolish enough to be themselves the framers of these means. Who then is he who ventures to do what none else ever did? Who is this who, ere he dies, by his own act and deed sets up the memorial institution by which his death is to be shown forth? Surely he must be one who knows and feels that he has claims to be remembered such as none other ever had,—claims of such a kind that, in pressing them in such a way upon the notice of his followers, he has no fear whatever of what he does being attributed to any other, any lesser motive than the purest, deepest, most unselfish love? Does not Jesus Christ in the very act of instituting in his own lifetime this memorial rite, step at once above the level of ordinary humanity, and assert for himself a position toward mankind utterly and absolutely unique?

And if, by the mere fact of Jesus Christ having erected with his own hand the institute by which his name and memory were to be kept alive, the impression might thus, and naturally enough, have been conveyed into the mind of our supposed inquirer, of there being something superhuman about him, would not this

impression be sustained and enhanced as he ran his eye over the words which, on this occasion, Christ was represented as having addressed to his disciples? Something surely quite original, belonging to himself alone, was the way in which he spoke of his relationship to his own disciples, to all mankind, to the Divine Being whom he called his Father. To his own disciples you hear him saying, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' 'Abide in me and I in you.' 'Without me ye can do nothing.' 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' 'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.' As to all men you hear him saying, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' And as to God, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.' 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' 'And this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' 'All mine are thine, and thine are mine.' 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me

where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' Out of those few hours which Jesus spent with the twelve within the walls of the guest-chamber at Jerusalem, from what he did there, and what he said, how much would there be to awaken in the spirit of such an inquirer as we have imagined, the most intense curiosity as to the real character of him who appears as president in this Passover celebration ; how much to carry the conviction home either that he was a vain presumptuous egotist, taking a place among his fellows and before God to which he had no right, or he was other than an ordinary child of Adam, one who stood in quite a different position both to God and to man from that which any one before, or any one since in the history of our race has occupied.

With these remarks upon the general impressions which a first reading of the narrative of all that happened in the guest-chamber might be supposed to make on the mind of an intelligent and candid reader, let us look with our own eyes at the different accounts which have been transmitted to us of the institution of the

Lord's Supper. They are four in number. The one first written and published was that of St. Paul, remarkable not only as coming from one who was not an eye-witness, but who received it by immediate revelation from our Lord himself. Springing from such a peculiar and independent source, its concurrence with those of the three Evangelists is striking and satisfactory ; for all the four accounts do thoroughly and substantially agree. There are indeed many verbal differences between them. No two of the narrators put exactly the same words in Christ's lips. We might have expected that if any words of our Lord were to be reported with exact and literal fidelity, they would have been those uttered by him on this occasion. That it is not so is one of the many proofs that it was the general meaning and substance of what Christ said, rather than the exact expressions which he employed, that the sacred writers were instructed to preserve. Three of the four accounts agree in telling us that there was a double blessing or giving of thanks, the first at the breaking of the bread, the second at the giving of the cup. But no record whatever is preserved of the words in which these benedictions or prayers were

couched ; a silence, not perhaps without reason, considering that it is in and by the consecration prayer of the priest, regarded as corresponding to these benedictions, that the mysterious change in the elements is by some supposed to be effected. Two of the four accounts agree in telling us that there was an interval—how occupied is not told—between the two acts, that of breaking the bread and handing round the cup ; the one taking place while the Supper was in progress, the other not till it was ended. Two also of the four accounts agree in telling us that it was as they were eating, *i. e.*, partaking in the ordinary way of the Paschal supper, that the bread of the new Christian rite was blessed and broken.

It is not possible, indeed, with the broken and imperfect lights that we have here in hand, to have anything like a distinct conception of the exact order of events. It is, however, almost certain, that it was after the Paschal lamb was eaten, and towards the close therefore of the Jewish ordinance, that Christ either interrupted the ordinary course of the feast, or turned that which had been the final distribution of a portion of the unleavened bread to a new and peculiar use. Anyhow, we may well

believe that there was something in our Lord's manner when he took the loaf in hand and lifted up his voice in prayer, and blessed and brake, that closed every lip and fixed on him every eye. The wonder heightened when he said, 'Take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me.' It may have been, we presume it was, a silent interval which occurred, till the time came for the last cup of the feast, of the cup of blessing, to be handed round. Having blessed it also, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it : for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'

How, then, we ask ourselves, after having studied as minutely as we can all that has been told us of the first observance of this ordinance, how, at what times, and in what manner, did our Lord intend that it should be celebrated in his Church? The first disciples, the apostles themselves, had to put the same question, and we know something of the way in which they answered it. They could not, of course, connect it any more, as Christ had done, with the Paschal supper, but following so far, as they thought, their Lord's example, they did connect

it with a social meal ; and so full of love were they, so anxious to have the memory of their risen Saviour ever before them, they continued daily breaking the bread from house to house. The associating, however, of the religious rite with a common supper led speedily to abuse. The secular and the social vitiated the spiritual, till, in such a case as that which occurred at Corinth, all the sacredness and awe and tender love with which the bread of this ordinance had at first been broken, were lost amid the tumult of a riotous entertainment, in which some ate as the hungry eat, and in which others were drunken. The strong hand of St. Paul was put forth to check so glaring an outrage on all the decencies of Christian worship. Under his rebuke the churches began to discountenance the practice which had opened the door to this abuse. The social meal, under the name of *Agapé*, or love-feast, was dissociated altogether from the religious observance. The Lord's Supper ceased to be a supper. It was celebrated in the morning or mid-day, and not in the evening. The daily changed into the weekly observance, where it long stood ; the weekly into the monthly, where it still stands in many churches ; the monthly, in some cases, into the

yearly, as was long the custom in our own country.

Does not all this teach us how free in this matter the Church has been left by its great Founder,—how little he cared about the form as compared with the spirit in which the memory of his dying love was to be preserved and perpetuated? As to time, and place, and order, and outward circumstance, he left all loose. He framed no directory; he did not even leave behind any example that could be exactly copied. It has been so ordered, both as to the original words and actions of our Lord, and the accounts that we have of them, that all attempts to re-enact, as it were, the scene in the guest-chamber are futile and vain.

Two things, indeed, appear to be essential to a right conception of it. First, that in some way or other we recognize this ordinance as a social meeting. It is by sitting down at one table, and partaking together of the food spread thereon, that the ties of brotherhood and friendship are, in common life, expressed and maintained. And that all true believers are, without distinction and on equal terms, invited to sit down at the tables of the Christian communion, to be partakers of that one bread,—

is not this designed to teach them that they form one body, one brotherhood, all whose members should be bound together by the spirit of love and sympathy, and readiness to bear each other's burdens, and to give each other help? The existing state of matters in our large Christian societies, when so many who know nothing of one another associate in this holy ordinance, stands in the way of this being realized. Nevertheless, it ought ever to be regarded as one part of its intention, to impress upon us the unity of the Christian brotherhood, their oneness with one another, and the duties of universal charity which this unity, this oneness, involves.

Still more striking, however, and still more important is it, to notice what the source, and bond, and seal of this union of all true Christians with one another is, as symbolized and represented in this chief rite of our religion. Christ would unite us to one another by bringing us to the same table, and dividing out to us the same bread and wine. But that bread and wine, what are they? His own body, his own blood; no true union with each other, but by and through such a union with himself as is represented by the image—almost too strong,

we might think, and somewhat rude and harsh, yet one of the aptest that could be used—of our taking him and feeding upon him—eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

XVIII.

GETHSEMANE.*

Thursday.

THE Paschal celebration over and his own Supper instituted, Jesus and his disciples united in singing a hymn. We should like to have known certainly what the words were, in singing which the voices of Jesus and the eleven blended. If, as there is much reason to believe, they were those of the 115th, 116th, 117th, and 118th Psalms, with what singular emotion must our Lord have repeated the verses : ‘ The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me : I found trouble and sorrow. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. The Lord is on my side ; I will not fear : what can man do unto me ? The stone which the

* Matt. xxvi. 36-46 ; Mark xiv. 32-42 ; Luke xxii. 39-46.

builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.'

The hymn having been sung, and the words recorded in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of St. John having been spoken, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Arise, let us go hence.' At his command they rise and are ready to follow him. But he does not immediately go forth. It grieves him to break up the interview. He will prolong it to the uttermost ; give to them the last moments that can be spared. As they cluster round him, he continues his address.

At last it closes with these comforting words : 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.' So ended that discourse, which, spoken originally to a small and undistinguished company in a rude upper chamber at Jerusalem, has already won for itself an audience vaster and more varied than ever listened to the words of any other speaker upon earth, and which has rendered but a small part of the wide service of instruction and comfort which it is destined to discharge to the sinful and sorrowful children of our race.

Our Lord's last act of intercourse with his

own in the upper chamber was to bear them upon the arms of faith before his Father, in the offering of that sublime intercessory prayer which he has left behind him as a specimen of the advocacy which, as their great High Priest, he conducts for his people before the Throne.

From the room rendered so sacred by all that had been said and done in it, Jesus and the eleven at last depart. It was near midnight, but the full moon lighted them on their way. They passed out of one of the city gates, descended into the valley of Jehoshaphat, crossed the Kedron, and made their way to the garden of Gethsemane,* the well-known retreat where Jesus had often lately spent the night ; consecrating beforehand the scene of his great agony by seasons of solitary prayer. At the entrance to this garden Jesus said to his disciples generally, 'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.' There was nothing strange in his desiring to be alone. He had often before

* However ready to do so, we could not, when in its neighborhood, persuade ourselves that the traditional is the real Gethsemane. It is too close to the city and too near a road which, at least in Passover times, must have been a very public thoroughfare. Higher up the valley of Jehoshaphat there is a recess in the western slopes of Mount Olivet which seemed to us much more likely to have been the scene of our Lord's agony.

severed himself in like manner from the twelve. But there was something singular in it,—showing that he was looking forward to something more than an ordinary night of solitary rest or prayer,—when, instructing the others to remain where they were, he took Peter, and James, and John along with him farther into the interior of the garden. They had been the three chosen and honored witnesses of his Transfiguration on the Mount. Was it to behold some new display of his power and glory that they were taken now again apart? Was the Father about to answer the petition so lately offered, and in their presence, to glorify his Son? Were they again to gaze upon their Master clothed in light, shining all over with a brightness that would throw the moonlight which bathed them into shadow? Wondering what was to come, Peter, James, and John follow their Master as he leads them into the recesses of Gethsemane, towards some spot perhaps which overhanging olive-branches or the swelling hillside shaded, intercepting the moonbeams. Ere they reach that spot he turns to speak to them. There is a great change upon his countenance, but it is into gloom, not into glory. He looks as one ‘sore amazed and very

heavy,' upon whose spirit the horror of some great darkness, the pressure of some great burden, has fallen. He speaks, but the calmness and serenity which had breathed in every tone of his voice are gone. 'My soul,' he says to them, 'is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.'

Strange aspect for their Master to wear; strange words for him to speak! They had never seen that countenance so overshadowed. They had never heard him utter such mournful language. What can it be that has wrought so sudden a change? What deep trouble of the soul is it that vents itself in these words? Peter perhaps might have put some question to his Master, but the time is not given him. 'Tarry ye here,' Christ adds, 'and watch with me.' Leaving them in their turn amazed, he withdraws from them about a stone-cast (forty or fifty yards), not so far off but that they can see, and even hear him. He reaches the shaded spot, he kneels, he falls upon his face, and from the prostrate form the prayer goes up to heaven: 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' It may have been but a short time that Jesus remained in this

posture of prayer. Brief as it was, on rising and returning to where he had left the three disciples, he found them sleeping. Waking them, and singling out Peter, the one of whom this should have been least expected, he says to him, 'Simon, sleepest thou?*' After all your late professions of being so willing to follow me to prison and to death, 'what! couldst not thou watch with me one hour?' Then to him and to the others he says, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' How did the Saviour look, on this his first return from the place of his agony? Was the trouble gone from his countenance? did nothing but the shadow of it remain? The interval must have brought some relief. When he rose from the ground, retraced his steps, bent over his disciples, stirred them up from their slumbers, spoke to them as he did, is it not evident that for the time the current of his thoughts was changed; a temporary calm was spread over his troubled spirit; the inward conflict was not such as that which had cast him on the ground, and drawn from him the prayer to

* Mark xiv. 37.

his Father? Again, however, our Lord leaves the three and retires to the same spot. As he reaches it, the heavy agony is again upon his soul,—heavier, if that could be, than before. Again it bows him to the earth: again he prays as before, but now still more earnestly, the inward pressure telling so upon the outward form, that his sweat is ‘as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.’ The human power to bear, strained to its utmost limits, seems ready to give way. There appears ‘an angel from heaven strengthening him.’ And now there is a second pause or interval of respite, in which the three are visited a second time, and a second time found sleeping. But he does not waken them as he had done before; or if he does, he does not stay to speak to those whose eyes are heavy, and who ‘wist not what to answer him.’ He is content to stand for a moment, bending on them a look of compassion and unutterable love. The call to the struggle comes again. A third time he is on the cold, bare earth; a third time the same words, expressive of the same inward conflict and suffering go up to heaven. The thrice-repeated prayer is so far answered. The strength is given, the conflict is over. ‘Then he cometh to his disci-

ples and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.' Even as he speaks he hears the sound of approaching footsteps, or catches sight of the high priest's band, with the traitor at its head, and so he adds, ' Rise, let us be going : behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.' From face and form and voice and spirit every trace of the inward tumult and agony is gone. Never perhaps in all his life did the Saviour appear in calmer, serener dignity than when he stepped forth to meet the betrayer ; nor did the calmness and serenity for a moment forsake him, all through the trial, and the mocking and the scourging, and the crowning him with thorns, and the nailing him to the cross. Nor did the soul-conflict and soul-agony return till, from the midst of the darkness that for three hours wrapped the cross, we hear a cry, kindred to those which cleft the midnight air within Gethsemane, ' My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?'

Passing with Jesus from the upper chamber into the garden, one of the first impressions made upon us is that of the suddenness and greatness of the transition. Delivered within the compass

of the same hour, what a contrast between the prayers of the one place and of the other,—the one so calm, so serene, so elevated ; the others so dark and troubled ! Look first at him as, with eyes uplift to heaven, he offers up the one ; look at him again as, prostrate on the earth, in garments moist with sweat and blood, he offers up the other. Listen to him as, speaking on a level with the throne itself, he says, ‘ Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.’ Listen to him as, in petitions brief and broken, wrung from a spirit torn with most intense sorrow, he says, ‘ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ What a mighty and mysterious descent from that height above to these depths beneath ! And how rapidly described ; the transition so quick, with nothing outward to account for it. If it be, as we know it is, a severe trial for our humanity to pass rapidly from one extreme of emotion to another, if the trial be greater the stronger the contrast between the two states of feeling, and the quicker the change takes place—if rapid passage from extreme joy to extreme grief, or the reverse, have been known even to loose the silver cord and break the golden bowl

of life,—let us ask ourselves to what a trial, apart from all consideration of the depth or intensity of the emotions themselves, must the humanity of our Lord have been exposed during the last twelve hours before his death, arising from the very suddenness and greatness of those alternations through which he passed.

But wherein did the great sorrow which came upon him in Gethsemane consist? It is inconceivable and inadmissible that it was the prospect of those outward sufferings and that bodily death which lay between him and the grave in which he was next day to be laid, that agitated to such an extreme degree the spirit of our Saviour, and wrung from him the thrice repeated prayer. Admitting to the fullest extent that our nature shrinks from suffering, recoils from death; that suffering and dying are those strange things ‘for which human nature in the beginning was not created;’ that the purer, fuller, more perfect that nature is—the more abhorrent to it they must be, and that, consequently, the intensity of the shrinking, the depth of the recoil, would be at its maximum point in the sinless humanity of our Lord,—yet are there overbalancing considerations which forbid the idea that had it been mere ordinary

sufferings, such as any other man placed in the same circumstances might have felt, and a mere ordinary death that Jesus had before him, he would or could have shrunk in such a way beneath the prospect. For let us remember, that if, on the one hand, we attribute to Christ every sinless infirmity to which our nature is liable, on the other hand we must attribute to him every virtue, and that in its highest quality and degree of which that nature is capable, and among these patience and fortitude. Other men have endured as much physical suffering, have passed through as ignominious and as torturing deaths, without the slightest ruffling of spirit, with the calmest and most heroic fortitude, mingling even ecstatic songs of praise with the sounds of the crackling fagots by which their bodies were consumed. Are we to degrade our Saviour beneath the common martyr-level, or believe that a burden that others bore so easily prostrated him in the garden, forced from him those prayers, and wrapped him in that bloody sweat?

It is true indeed that Christ had a clear and perfect vision beforehand of all that he was to endure, such as no other can have, and this may have heightened the power of the dark

prospect that lay before him. But such a vision was his from the beginning. Why was it only now, here at Gethsemane, that it so specially and deeply affected him? Besides, his complete and accurate foreknowledge extended beyond the cross, embraced the resurrection and ascension. If in the foreground there were humiliation, suffering, and death, in the background were exaltation and triumph. Should not the depression produced by the vivid foresight of the one, have been relieved by the hope and joy excited by the as vivid foresight of the other?

Relinquishing the idea that it was the prospect of the physical sufferings of the cross that induced the agony of the garden, it may be thought that this agony was due to the presentiment of that deeper inward woe which wrung with such bitter anguish the spirit of our Lord, from the hidden depths of which there went up the mysterious utterance, 'My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?' But is this likely? With us imagination may swell out some threatening and impending calamity into such false proportions, that we may actually suffer more from the anticipation than from the reality. Could it have been so

with Christ?—In a mind like his, where all the faculties and feelings of our nature existed in perfect balance, we should naturally expect that the due proportion would be observed between the pressure produced by anticipation and that produced by the actual event; that the one should be but a shadow of the other. Is it so here? Is the Gethsemane sorrow a mere shadow of the sorrow of the cross? All that is told us of it testifies that under it, whatever it was, the whole power of endurance that was in our Lord's humanity was tried and tested to the very last degree. It was a purely mental anguish, yet such a strain did it exert upon the body that it forced the life-current of the blood out of its accustomed channels, and sent it forth to mingle with the drops of sweat that fell to the ground. It was an agony so intense that three times, with the utmost vehemence of desire, the request went up to heaven, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' We can readily understand that from a quarter of which we shall presently have to speak, our Saviour's spirit might, and did, lie open to an anguish of such a peculiar nature and intensity that it is saying nothing more of him than that he was a man, to say that such

strong crying for relief issued from his lips ; the vehemence of the desire for this relief offering a gauge and measure of the pressure that produced it. But we cannot understand, if it were not the actual endurance itself, but only the foresight of it that was operating on him, how he who had all along been looking forward to the de cease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, who was so straitened till it was accomplished, who knew so well that it was for that very end he came into the world,—should at this one time be so moved by the mere prospect of the cup being put into his hand, that he should so vehemently recoil from it, and so ardently desire that it might pass from him.

We feel ourselves shut up to the conclusion that the agony of the garden was inward, unique, mysterious, impossible to fathom ; the same in source, the same in ingredients, the same in design, the same in effect with our Lord's spiritual sufferings on the cross ; an integral and constituent part of the endurance to which, as our spiritual head and representative, he submitted, and which sprang from our iniquities being laid upon him, in a way and manner that is not open to us to comprehend. 'He bare our sins in his own body on the tree,'

offering there, not merely or mainly his body to the Roman executioner, but his soul in sacrifice to God. Consummated upon the cross, this soul offering was made also in the garden. Jesus spake of an hour and a cup which became so identified in the minds of the Evangelists, that they are used interchangeably in the narrative of the Passion. The hour and the cup were one, embracing the entire suffering unto death. The hour was on him, and he passed through it; the cup was in his hand, he put it to his lips and drank it equally in the garden and on the cross. In passing through that hour, in drinking that bitter cup, he made the great atonement for our transgressions. Some great obstacle there must have been in the way of our restoration to the Divine favor. Whatever it was, by the obedience unto death of God's dear Son it has been wholly removed. 'Father,' he said, 'if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' If ever from this earth a cry for relief from suffering went up to God to which his ear was open, surely it was this; whom should the Father shield from sorrow if not his own dear Son? Yet the cup did not pass away. The prayer was answered in the strength to endure being given, but not in the

endurance being removed. To that endurance we are to look as furnishing the ground of our forgiveness and acceptance. It has taken every obstruction which our guilt, the holiness and justice of the Divine character, the integrity and majesty of the Divine law, the stability and prosperity of God's great spiritual empire, interposed between us and the immediate and entire blotting out of all our iniquities.

Spread over the whole of our Lord's suffering life, it was condensed in the agony of the garden and the anguish of the cross. But why broken into these two great sections, of which we can scarcely tell which was the larger, or in which the suffering was the more intense? Why but that in the sight of such a sorrow descending upon the Saviour's spirit, in the absence of all inflictions from without,—in the quiet of the garden, in the loneliness of the midnight hour,—before a hand had been laid on him, before thorn had touched his brow, or scourge his back, or nail his hands and feet, we might learn to separate in our thoughts the mental and spiritual from the bodily sufferings of Christ ; to recognize the truth of the saying, that the sufferings of his soul formed the soul of his sufferings.

But while the breaking of the great endurance into these two portions—the one borne in the garden, and the other upon the cross—carries with it this instructive lesson, is nothing to be learned from the subdivision of the former into those three parts which were separated so distinctly from one another? Does this subdivision not carry with it an indication of the perfect voluntariness on Christ's part of the sufferings of Gethsemane? To give them their vicarious and atoning virtue, it was necessary that Christ's sufferings should throughout possess this character. Many things about the time and manner and circumstances of his death were obviously so ordered as to make it evident that he laid down his life of himself, that no man took it from him. Much also about the agony of the garden evinces that it was voluntarily undergone, and might easily, had Christ so willed, have been avoided. Do not those three breaks and pauses,—his taking up and laying down the cup, his coming to and going from his disciples, correspond best with the idea of the agony being one not laid upon him from without or endured by compulsion, but one which he could and did take on or lay off, into which he entered by an act and effort

of thought and will ; by the vivid realizing of the spiritual relationship in which he stood to the great world of transgressors ; his voluntary susception of their sins ?

Apart from any such view of it, let us look at the manner of his dealing with the disciples in the course of his agony. Why did Jesus, in planting the three at the entrance of the garden, say to them, 'Tarry ye here and watch with me ?' It may have been, to assign to them the post of watchful sentinels, the duty of guarding him against surprise, of giving him timely notice of approaching danger. He had already distinctly warned them of some impending peril, of a storm that was about to burst on him, of such force and pressure that it would drive every one of them from his side. He had told them that one of themselves was that night to betray him. Although at the time none but John knew about the traitor, the abrupt departure of Judas must have excited their attention, and John had time and opportunity on their way out to the garden to tell them on what errand he had gone. Jesus knew when he dismissed him that prompt action was needed ; and what he did, Judas must have done quickly. He had to go to some of the men

with whom he had made his compact, and tell them that he was ready instantly to fulfill it. He knew where Jesus would go. They might seize him there at dead of night, without danger of popular tumult. They had not intended to arrest him during the feast, but the opportunity now offered is too tempting for them to resist. He may be in their hands before day dawn. His trial and condemnation can quickly be despatched. Let instant execution follow, and before the people gather for the morning sacrifice the hated Galilean may be removed. They at once agree with the proposal of the traitor, and as the small company in the upper chamber is breaking up, in another part of the city a larger one is assembling to move under the leadership of the betrayer.

Nothing of this was known to the disciples, yet something might have been suspected. When Jesus placed them at their posts, and bade them watch with him, might they not naturally enough have regarded this as a summons to them to guard his hours of prayer and rest from the approach of the enemy? Nor does the fact that it was the fixed and predetermined purpose of Christ to wait for and voluntarily surrender himself to the high priest's

band, militate against the idea that this duty was laid on them. And had they proved true to such a charge, —scattered as they were like outlying pickets, first the three, and then farther off the eight,—had they kept a strict lookout upon the path that led out from the city, each eye searching the shady places, each ear open to catch the sound of approaching footsteps, long ere it reached the spot the betrayer's company might have been detected, the warning given, and timely flight effected. But the sentinels slept at their posts, till their Master came and roused them with the words, 'Rise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand.'

Christ's call to watchfulness and prayer was not so much for his sake as for theirs. It was that they might not enter into, so as to be overcome by temptation. Thick-coming and heavy woes were impending over himself,—the arrest, the trial, the condemnation, the crucifixion. He would prepare for all by prayer. When Judas comes he will find his Master just risen from his knees, the fitter thereby to pass in serene composure through all that lay before him. And he knows that trials await his disciples as well as himself: they will have to

pass through the shame and the reproach of being recognized as his followers ; they will have tests applied to their fidelity needing more strength than they now possess. He bids them watch and pray that the needed strength may be imparted. They neglect the counsel, they waste the precious interval. The betrayer is upon them and their Master ; upon him fresh from prayer, upon them all unprepared, roused from their heavy sleep.

In our lesser sorrows we throw ourselves upon the sympathy of others ; in our greater, we seek solitude and wrap ourselves in silence. The solitude breeds selfishness. In bearing our heavy burdens we are apt to become self-engrossed and careless about others. How did the Saviour act in the hour of his so bitter grief ? The strong instinct of humanity was upon him, and he would be alone, yet not alone. Had absolute solitude been sought for, he would have planted the whole eleven at the entrance into Gethsemane, and himself gone so far into the interior that no human eye had been on him, no earthly witness near. In taking Peter, and James, and John so far along with him, and placing them where they may have seen and heard, does not a craving for

human sympathy reveal itself? He will not have them close beside him when the mysterious agony is experienced. Into it, from its nature as well as from its depth, he knows they cannot enter. But he would have them near, looking on at a distance, following him with such broken sympathy as they can give. It will be a solace and a support to him ; and had they watched and given him the sympathy he craved, no angel from heaven might have been needed ; theirs might have been the honor and the happiness of strengthening him in the hour of weakness. But whatever solace or support they might have given was withheld. They sleep on all the time, roused but for a moment to relapse into repose. And when he comes to them at last, is there not something like mournful irony and reproach in his words, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest?' The time for watching, praying, sympathizing is past ; no longer can your sleeping do any harm, your watching do any good. The opportunity is forever gone, the good is irrecoverably lost, the evil irreparably done.

. It does not so much surprise us that at the first Peter, and James, and John should have

fallen asleep. It had been a long, exciting evening, and by the strange sorrow that had filled their breasts they were weakened for watchfulness. But that after the first visit and the pointed rebuke, Christ should come a second and a third time and find them sleeping still, it needed his own Divine compassion to forgive and overlook. His comings and goings, his mingling of these repeated visits to the disciples with the great atoning grief, how high in our esteem should this raise our Lord and Saviour; how near to our hearts should it bring him!

And ere we leave Gethsemane, let a parting thought be bestowed on the great example Christ has left us of the spirit in which all heavy trials and sorrows should be met and borne. A stone-cast measured the distance in the garden which separated him from the nearest of his followers; but who shall measure for us that distance in the spiritual world which then separated the Man of Sorrows from every other sufferer of our race? His outward separation and solitude, how imperfect an emblem of the inner solitude of his soul! From the depths of that lonely agony do we not hear a voice saying to us,

‘Behold ! and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow ?’ But though so far removed from us, there is a sense in which we must have fellowship with this suffering of Christ, must drink of the same cup, and be baptized with the same baptism. With us also there come times when all the strength we have is strained to the uttermost and is ready to give way. . There are Gethsemanes in the followers’ as in the Master’s life. When they come, let us look at and try to copy his example. Being in agony, he prayed simply, earnestly, repeatedly, using the same words again and again. Is any cup of more than usual bitterness put into our hands, let us too pray in the same spirit and in the same manner. He mingled care and thought for others with his own intensest sorrow. In his weakness he accepted an angel’s help. Let not the heaviest grief that ever comes upon us shut our heart to gentle pity. And whoever they be that come to sympathize with and to help us, let us count them as angels sent from heaven, and give them an angel’s welcome. . ‘Let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.’—It was not sinful in him to desire relief from

poignant grief, nor is it so in us. But with us as with him, let the desire for relief mingle with and be lost in the spirit of an entire submission to the will of our Father in heaven.

THE END.

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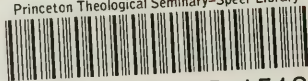
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